

University of Dundee

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Achieving fairness? Challenging poverty and social exclusion through partnership working

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# University of Dundee

## Achieving fairness? Challenging poverty and social exclusion through partnership working

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
School of Social Science

MARISOL LOPEZ

27<sup>th</sup> May 2020

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**List of acronyms**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CONNECT | Community Outreach Neighbourhood Networkers<br>Encouraging Change team |
| DEEAP   | Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project                                |
| DLA     | Disability Living Allowance  |
| DWP     | Department for Work and Pensions                                       |
| ESA     | Employment and Support Allowance                                       |
| JSA     | Jobseeker's Allowance  |
| OSCR    | Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator                               |
| PIP     | Personal Independence Payment  |
| SIMD    | Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation                                 |
| SNA     | Social Network Analysis  |
| SSM     | Soft Systems Methodology   |
| UC      | Universal Credit   |

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## **Abstract**

Income inequality and poverty have been a persistent and prevailing issue in Scotland (Mooney, 2014; McKendrick, 2014). Despite efforts of the Scottish Government (2016a) to lower poverty rates, statistics demonstrate an increase in poverty levels since 2011 (Scottish Government, 2019a). The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (UK Government, 2012) has resulted in an additional loss of resources for the most disadvantaged areas in Scotland (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018). To tackle the high levels of inequality and poverty, local authorities have been implementing Fairness Commissions, which are strategies that advocate partnership working and the inclusion of the community (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Lyall, 2015). This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how inequality is impacted through services, partnership working, and wider support networks. A series of longitudinal interviews was conducted with 23 service users (of which 12 participated in a follow-up). Further interviews were held with five support workers and three policymakers. Additionally, a Social Network Analysis was conducted with 42 organisations. This was framed within the context of a critical systems approach (Kogetsidis, 2012). The findings of this research demonstrate that individuals experience intersectional inequalities which restrict social mobility. Service users accessed support during times of crises, through which they encountered wider support services. Within these wider services, this research identified ‘hidden communities’ in which individuals had created ‘collective capital’, framed as an alternate understanding of social capital. Individuals had created networks of support established on foundations of solidarity and compassion, resulting out of experiences of severe social exclusion and inequality. Whilst the organisations in which these networks were established were reported as being the most beneficial to service users on a long-term basis, many of these organisations struggled to secure funding. Organisations which were aligned with public partnerships had more steady income streams, allowing for greater power within the network. These findings highlight the need for a prevention of inequality, a review of the funding environment for support services and a reconsideration of theory on social capital.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

This thesis looks at how individuals who are negatively impacted by inequality build networks of support. It examines how the effects of inequality are mitigated through the provision of services, with a focus on multiagency partnerships and the inclusion of communities in decision-making processes. This chapter will provide a detailed overview of the study, as well as insights into the historical, theoretical and political context to the research reported here. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of why it is important to understand how individuals mitigate the effects of inequality. First, the chapter will provide a brief overview of this research and provide the theoretical context for carrying it out by introducing how inequality is framed within existing literature (Section 1.2). Section 1.3 will contextualise the need for this research by providing an overview of inequality in Scotland and Dundee, and how this is affected by the Welfare Reform Act of 2012 (UK Government, 2012). It will also look at how partnerships and community inclusion strategies have been introduced to combat the effects of inequality, with a particular focus on the Dundee Fairness Strategy (Dundee Partnership, 2012). This highlights the importance of understanding how inequality is mitigated through service networks in the community. Section 1.4 will summarise the rationale and theoretical context as set out in the previous sections. The following section will introduce the methodological approach applied in this project and how it contributed to expanding knowledge in the field of inequality (see Section 1.5). This research makes significant contributions to: the conceptualisation of inequality; the structural barriers which hinder the reduction of inequality; and how individuals who suffer from the effects of inequality have established networks of solidarity to take a stance against the stigmatisation they face in wider society. The findings further highlight barriers to social mobility, which are deepened through intersectional inequalities, including institutional stigma of individuals with disabilities or substance use-issues. The final section will provide an overview of the structure of this thesis (Section 1.6).

## 1.2 Overview

### 1.2.1 Summary of research

The key aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how inequality is impacted through social services and wider support networks. This thesis explores how these representations of inequality manifest themselves in the lives of the individuals and how they build support networks through the provision of services to overcome elements of these inequalities. Instead of assuming that services are beneficial towards individuals seeking support, this research explores the impact of services on those who engage with them from the perspective of those who use services. Previous research has demonstrated inconclusive evidence on how individuals considered to be in poverty build social networks (see Section 2.11). This project is particularly interested in understanding how partnership working affects the process of individuals creating support networks, as partnership working is aimed at providing ease of access to a greater range of support networks for individuals (Pierson, 2002, Kuosmanen and Starke, 2011). Health and social services that engage with socioeconomic inequality have advocated partnership working since the 1990s. As the name suggests, the approach involves a collaborative effort between organisations, generally conducted on a local level to tackle a common aim (Phillips, 2002; Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013). This study demonstrates how these inter-organisational relationships affect service provision to service users, aiming to understand how the service network, i.e. the complex interactions between service users, service providers, stakeholders and policymakers, works as a whole. To understand this, the research focuses on service user's experiences with services that work in partnership with one another and processes within and between organisations that affect service provision. The aim of this research is to understand whether partnership working is effective at tackling inequality, with an objective to provide best practice solutions to improving services (see Objective 5 in Section 1.5).

### 1.2.2 Theoretical context

Research on social and economic inequality, poverty and social exclusion is incredibly vast. The understanding of how inequality has developed from prehistoric civilisations to capitalism in an interconnected, globalised world will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. To summarise inequality, it is important to understand that the economic

structure provides benefits to some population groups and disadvantages to others. These inequalities are further strengthened through the existence of hereditary privilege, referring to the transfer of wealth from one generation to another, which reinforces inequality rather than overcoming it. Whilst individuals who have higher levels of wealth maintain their wealth over generations, individuals who struggle with poverty struggle to move out of it (Section 2.12 will discuss social mobility in more detail). As a result of these economic structures, society has developed a misguided understanding that holds individuals responsible for their economic circumstances (Dorling, 2015), despite research underlining that social and economic factors are attributable for the existence of poverty, rather than individual factors (McKendrick, 2014). This thesis recognises that inequality is the greater issue to be tackled as poverty only refers to a symptom of a wider societal condition. The precise reasoning behind this will be elaborated in Section 2.9. However, the fairness strategies researched within the context of this thesis focus their efforts on tackling poverty, deprivation and social exclusion on a local level. These are symptoms of wider social and economic inequalities, which are rooted in national and global economic, legislative and social processes (see Sections 2.3 to 2.6). For this reason, this thesis will investigate the effect that these strategies have on poverty, deprivation and social exclusion within the context of wider social and economic inequality.

Poverty is characterised by a lack of monetary wealth or material possessions. However, there is an abundance of wealth on this planet which is distributed unevenly amongst citizens (Davies, Lluberas and Shorrocks, 2019). Economic inequality encompasses a spectrum of individuals with the most wealth to those with the least. Those with the least amount of wealth within a society are generally those who are considered to experience poverty (Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, 2015). It could be argued that no matter the quality of life or the range of the spectrum of inequality, poverty will always exist as a relative concept to those at the wealthier end of the spectrum. However, the key issue with poverty is that it is not only experienced through a comparative lack of financial resources, but through a wide range of social and economic barriers to living an equal life and having an acceptable standard of living. Poverty is linked not only to a lack of financial and material resources (Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, 2015), but also to a lack of freedom of choice (Sen, 1999) and to powerlessness and voicelessness (Narayan, 2000). The theories by Sen (1999) and

Narayan (2000) are key frameworks for understanding that poverty is not just characterised by material deprivation, but through wider social inequalities and a lack of access to institutions. A further issue is that individuals who experience poverty likewise experience wider deprivation, such as a lack of access to adequate housing, healthcare, and other resources which are markers of an acceptable standard of living within the UK (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). It is important to mention that the preference of the term ‘inequality’ over ‘poverty’ is not a political statement which insinuates the non-existence of poverty or deprivation in modern Britain. It insinuates that it is unacceptable that some individuals do not have adequate resources to survive, whilst some individuals at the wealthier end of the inequality spectrum own more wealth than millions of others combined (Davies, Lluberas and Shorrocks, 2019). Many of the individuals participating in this research face, or have faced, severe poverty, deprivation and stigmatisation as a result of inequality, which was intensified through a range of intersectional inequalities. The choice to use the term inequality over poverty reflects the researcher’s interest in addressing inequality as an unequal distribution in opportunity. Social and economic inequality can affect those who are not considered to live in poverty by standard definition, such as the standard definition of relative poverty, which is defined by an income of less than 60% of the national median income (Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, 2015). Therefore, it is important to look beyond the rigidity of these classifications when seeking to achieve an equal society.

This thesis will engage with an approach that is commonly utilised by local governments and communities as a method of supporting individuals affected by poverty: the application of social services. This thesis takes an unbiased approach to understanding how individuals who are negatively affected by inequality are able to access support and build support networks. However, as participants were recruited through organisations who provide services, it was expected that these organisations would provide at least some element of support. Services which provide support for individuals who experience inequalities have existed within the UK for 400 years (Thane, 2009). They were initially driven by the church to assist individuals in poverty or of ill health but have now become an integral part of social and economic structures. The philosophical principles held by governments are a major factor in determining how inequality is tackled, as service provision is largely driven by national policies and guidelines (Thane, 2009). In the 2000s, an initiative brought into action by the

New Labour Government resulted in partnership-working being advocated as the new approach towards tackling poverty. Partnership working has since been a leading ideological principle which local authorities integrate into practice (Dickinson and Glasby, 2009). Partnership working, as the name suggests, refers to a collaborative effort of local bodies and organisations, often referring to cross-sectoral<sup>1</sup> cooperation, instead of individual organisations carrying out dispersed and fragmented efforts to tackle poverty. Tackling local issues as a collective and united group has proven to drive positive effects, such as more coordinated service provision and an easier access to a wider range of services (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013), which has been proven to be beneficial to individuals who are excluded from wider society (Pierson, 2002; Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014). However, significant concerns have been raised about the power relations within partnerships. Smaller organisations and novel approaches to service provision tend to suffer from the competition with larger, more established services. Despite local authorities promoting the inclusion of the Third Sector in partnerships, they are not likely to concede power to the smaller organisations. As these types of organisations frequently rely on funding through local authorities, the innovation these services can provide is inhibited (Sinclair et al., 2018). This can have knock-on effects impacting some of the most vulnerable individuals in society, who rely on non-statutory services for support (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014). This fact is particularly concerning, as partnership working is being advocated by national governments to fix or alleviate symptoms of problems which are caused by national legislative issues, such as welfare reforms and unregulated or underpaid employment (Scottish Government, 2016a). Local communities are held responsible for addressing the impact of these issues that are created by national legislation, such as the Welfare Reform Act of 2012 (UK Government, 2012). Partnership working embodies a diffusion of government responsibility in the handling of inequality and poverty. This has been framed within the context of fairness in the local poverty alleviation strategies that are researched within this thesis. John Rawls (1985) has conceptualised fairness as a societal principle in which citizens have equal rights and equal access to socioeconomic opportunities. This sets the framework for understanding the fairness commissions, which lie at the heart of this thesis. Researchers have argued that the use of the term “fairness” is the effect of

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<sup>1</sup> Cross-sectoral meaning across the sectors mentioned previously: public, private and Third sector.



neoliberalism<sup>2</sup> penetrating discourse of what we perceive as being just and fair treatment of other citizens. As the neoliberal economy fails to create employment opportunities in which all citizens are able to achieve basic subsistence, local authorities and grassroots organisations are being driven to “promote an alternative vision of the world as it should be, free from poverty and inequality” (Bunyan and Diamond, 2016, p.448; see Section 3.6.3). This thesis will discuss the benefits of having support networks locally, but it will also state that services cannot solely be held responsible for reducing levels of inequality, as many of its causes originate from wider forces, such as national legislation, cultural attitudes, and economic structures. The novelty of this research is that it will look at the longitudinal effects of partnership working, by evaluating the effectiveness of the Dundee Fairness Strategy, five years after its initial implementation. The Dundee Fairness Strategy, which has been continually developed since its initial implementation in 2012 (Dundee Partnership, 2012), aims to reduce social and economic inequality, *inter alia*, through an increased focus on partnership working between public and Third Sector services.

As interviews were conducted with service users, support workers and policymakers, this research provides a holistic insight into the functioning of the Dundee Fairness Strategy from many different levels of perspective. Fairness Commissions were originally implemented in London in 2011 and involve the members of the community in its decision-making process (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). Despite fairness commissions becoming increasingly popular over the past decade, there is little evidence to speak for their efficacy or the effect they have on the community. As a key aim of the Dundee Fairness Commission was to increase social and economic inclusion, as well as to promote higher levels of partnership working (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Dundee Partnership, 2016), this research will investigate how successful the strategy has been in achieving its goals. This research will shine light on how the Fairness Commission in Dundee has affected service provision and the service users for which it was created.

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<sup>2</sup> Neoliberalism is the economic model which, according to economic and political theory, prevails in modern society. It supports a lesser involvement of the state in economic affairs, which results in a deregulation of the economy (“free trade”), the privatisation of public bodies and a reduction of welfare provisions (Zuidhof, 2014). It also faces much criticism, as many theorists view neoliberalism as a smokescreen for governments holding individuals responsible for issues created on a national level.

### 1.2.3 Personal motivations

My interest in researching inequality has largely been guided through my voluntary experiences throughout the past decade. After moving to Dundee from abroad in 2010, I was initially taken aback by the high levels of visible poverty and deprivation in the City. I have had previous contact with many of the participating organisations through voluntary work, shadowing or previous research projects. Through these experiences, I was introduced to the great variety in support services that are available to individuals in Dundee. I was equally as taken aback by the level of commitment and effort that individuals all around the City put into providing support for others, often on a voluntary or very low-paid basis. From my perspective at the time, I noticed that the industry was largely driven by volunteers and workers who worked incredibly long hours to complete funding paperwork and provide support to those who accessed their services. Having witnessed the functioning of services from the perspective of a volunteer, an interest developed in understanding the drivers behind service provision and how the services affect service users on a larger scale. Despite my involvement in the Third Sector in the years prior to my PhD, I have taken measures to assure that my experiences have not biased how I conducted this research. I attempted to remain as unbiased as possible, being guided by the voices of participants rather than my own reflections. This thesis should act as a voice to those who participated in this research, using my knowledge as a researcher to guide recommendations to improve service provision, both for the service users and the workers within the network.

## 1.3 Research context

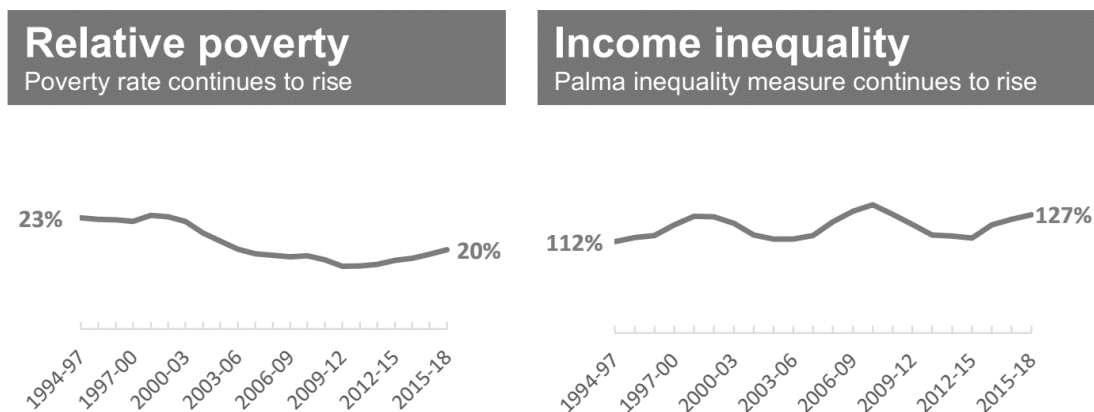
### 1.3.1 Inequality in Scotland

High levels of poverty and deprivation have been a continuous struggle for the devolved governments<sup>3</sup> of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, high poverty levels are a prevailing and persistent issue (Mooney, 2014; McKendrick, 2014). Devolution agreements have put an additional strain on Scotland. Scotland has committed to reducing poverty and inequality within key policy documents, such as the *Fairer Scotland Action Plan* (2016a). Despite these goals, the country struggles with high rates of inequality and poverty. Government statistics demonstrate that in the years

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<sup>3</sup> Devolution refers to the transfer of national power to smaller government bodies, such as the Scottish Government (Bogdanor, 2001)

2015-2018, the rates of relative and absolute poverty<sup>4</sup> stood at 20% and 19% of the total population, respectively, both increasing by one percent from the previous period (Scottish Government, 2019a, p.3). Whilst there has been a steady increase in both relative and absolute poverty since their lowest points in 2011, Figure 1.1 demonstrates that the overall rate of relative poverty has reduced since 1994. The key issue is the steady increase of income inequality. The statistics demonstrate that the top 10% of the population in 2015-2018 had 27% more income than the bottom 40% combined (Scottish Government, 2019a, p.17). Individuals considered to be in poverty face a whole range of wider social and economic inequalities, such as increased risks to ill health (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), stigmatisation by wider society (Lister, 2009; Alexandrescu, 2019) and a lack of access to support from institutions (Narayan, 2000; Whittle et al., 2017). For these reasons, this research focuses on the reduction of inequality over the reduction of poverty, as the latter would only target a symptom of a greater societal issues.



**Figure 1.1** Relative poverty and income inequality in Scotland (1994-2018)<sup>5</sup>

Source: Scottish Government (2019a, p.1)

<sup>4</sup> The terms absolute and relative poverty will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.8. The Scottish Government (2019a) defines relative poverty as “a measure of whether the income of the poorest households are keeping pace with middle income households” and absolute poverty as “a measure of whether the incomes of the poorest households are keeping pace with inflation” (p.3)

<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government (2019a) uses a measure called the Palma ratio to demonstrate income inequality. The figure demonstrates how much more income the top 10% of a population have with the bottom 40% combined (e.g. 127% means that the top 10% of the population has 27% more than the bottom 40% combined) (p.17).

Following the 2014 Independence Referendum in Scotland, the Smith Commission was established as a means for the Scottish Government to have more power over financial, welfare and taxation matters, which was expected to have a significant effect on economic and social equality (GovScot, 2019). Research has established that this was not the case. The impact of the welfare reforms, which will be elaborated in the following section (Section 1.3.2), was expected to have a detrimental impact on poverty levels (Kenway et al., 2015). The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 (UK Parliament, 2012), a nationwide strategy introducing cuts and changes in welfare, has pushed some of the most vulnerable individuals in Britain below the poverty line (Fin and Goodship, 2014). Some of those most affected by the reforms are children, individuals with physical disabilities or mental illness, single parents and pensioners. In the year 2013, 760,000 British individuals were forced into poverty as a result of the cuts (Aldrige, Kenway and Born, 2015). Local and devolved governments are struggling to adequately tackle the effects that the UK-wide reforms are having on levels of poverty (Scottish Parliament, 2014; IPPRN, 2014; Beatty and Fothergill, 2018). The following section will discuss the effects of this in more detail.

### 1.3.2 The Welfare Reform Act of 2012

With the introduction of the Coalition Government's Welfare Reform Act of 2012, welfare recipients across the United Kingdom have faced devastating changes to their income levels (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018). The changes were made by the Government with the justification of cutting expenditures to reduce public spending (UK Government, 2012). The new reforms set out to implement the following key changes amongst others:

- the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), aimed to tackle “poor work incentives and complexity”,
- a stricter penalty system, meaning longer sanctions<sup>6</sup> for individuals who did not adhere to regulations,
- a new range of conditionality for “entitlement” to welfare through “commitments”, such as an expectation towards hours spent searching for employment and partaking in “work-focussed interviews”,

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<sup>6</sup> A sanction refers to a reduction or a temporary discontinuation of benefits (Kennedy and Keen, 2016)

- changes to housing benefits, introducing an under-occupancy charge (the “bedroom tax”), which reduces housing benefits for those who live in public housing if the property contains bedrooms considered to be additional under new regulations,
- the introduction of a benefit cap,
- the replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (UK Government, 2012).

Despite claims by the Government, previous research has confirmed that the reforms have done little to support individuals out of poverty but have rather driven individuals deeper into poverty. The Government’s claims of supporting individuals into work may be true; however, reports demonstrate that in-work poverty has surpassed out-of-work poverty in recent years, negating any claims that the Government has made on this issue (McBride, Smith and Mbala, 2018). The rest of this section will detail the introduction of the most significant changes and their effect on welfare recipients and on inequality statistics overall.

UC is intended to replace a range of former welfare payments, including Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), income support and tax credits (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). The rhetoric behind these changes pushes the ideology of “positive citizenship”, meaning that individuals must contribute to society to be considered a valued citizen (Larkin, 2018). This idea essentially shames individuals who are out of work for not being a valued member of society. One of the biggest impacts that UC has had on its recipients is the introduction of much stricter regulations on a conditional benefit system. Prior to the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, a paper was released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation discussing the implications of a conditional benefits system (Griggs and Evans, 2010). The paper concluded that a strict sanctions scheme fails to penalise actual bad behaviour, but rather penalises individuals who perhaps did not understand their duties or made an unintentional error, leading to potential long-term financial difficulties. This is precisely what did happen when the Welfare Reform Act heightened its conditions for receiving benefits (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). Welfare recipients were far more likely to get sanctioned under the new regulations. Whistle-blower reports have been released of job centres required to reach sanction quotas, meaning that workers were required to sanction a certain percentage of recipients (Neville, 2016). This inevitably

led to employees sanctioning recipients for ‘offenses’, such as being five minutes late to a scheduled appointment (Neville, 2016), while some whistle-blowers reported staff actively giving out false information to the claimants to increase their sanction rate (Cowburn, 2015). This contrasts the guidelines as set out by the Government, stating that “[a] sanction should not be imposed on a person if they can show that they had “good reason” for behaving in the way they did” (Kennedy and Keen, 2016, p.7). As sanctions last between 4 and 13 weeks for a “first offence” (p.8), it becomes evident that this can, and usually does, have a catastrophic impact on individuals or families who already struggle to make ends meet. Food and fuel poverty, mental health issues, mistrust in the system and destruction of family relationships were all commonly reported outcomes of being sanctioned, with some even resorting to crime as a means of survival (Beatty et al., 2015). These penalties were aimed at increasing compliance, but their lack of consideration for minor mitigating circumstances have resulted in a mistreatment of those who rely on welfare. Individuals were also required to participate in unpaid workfare programmes, which were allegedly aimed at providing training opportunities and pathways into employment for individuals who participated in them. However, this was rarely the case, as most individuals did not gain employment as a result of the programmes (Daguerre and Etherington, 2014; Carter and Whitworth, 2017).

The second large wave of reforms began with the transition of individuals from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which impacted individuals who received support for disability or long-term illness. The aim of the transition was to give individuals an allowance more suitable to their illness, when, in reality, recipients were required to demonstrate that they were genuinely unable to work. For instance, individuals who were blind and used a cane were seen as being fit-to-work, whereas if they used a guide dog, they were declared unfit for work (Cross, 2013). Similarly, people with mental illness suffered from the transition, as they often could not define their illness through a checkbox system, which used criteria such as “Can manage toilet needs or incontinence unaided” (Machin, McCormack and Gidlow, 2018). Multiple participants in this research reported that they were told by support workers not to shower for days in advance and wear old clothes to make their illness seem more believable to assessors. This highlights the need for the recipients to prove themselves worthy of receiving the benefits, despite

having a clinically diagnosed illness. These paragraphs have detailed the expectations that are made of individuals who access welfare. Conditional welfare structures have previously been found to drive inequality by pushing individuals into an unregulated labour market and increasing stigmatised attitudes towards individuals who are seen as ‘undeserving’ (Wacquant, 2009; Payne, 2010).

Improving quality and accessibility of public and Third Sector services has been the primary solution to assist those most affected by the cuts in welfare in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016a). However, austerity measures are largely impacting the provision of services supporting individuals in poverty. Cuts to funding sources are one of the largest barriers local communities are facing in dealing with poverty (Aldrige, Kenway and Born, 2015; Bunyan and Diamond, 2014). Though partnership working has been implemented as a strategy since the Community Planning Partnerships in 2003, the Scottish Government (2012) has further encouraged partnership working to overcome barriers presented by high poverty and deprivation rates. This includes the recently developed concept of fairness commissions. This is in line with the Scottish Government’s goal of tackling inequality (Scottish Government, 2015). The following section will introduce inequality in the city of Dundee, which is the case study for this research.

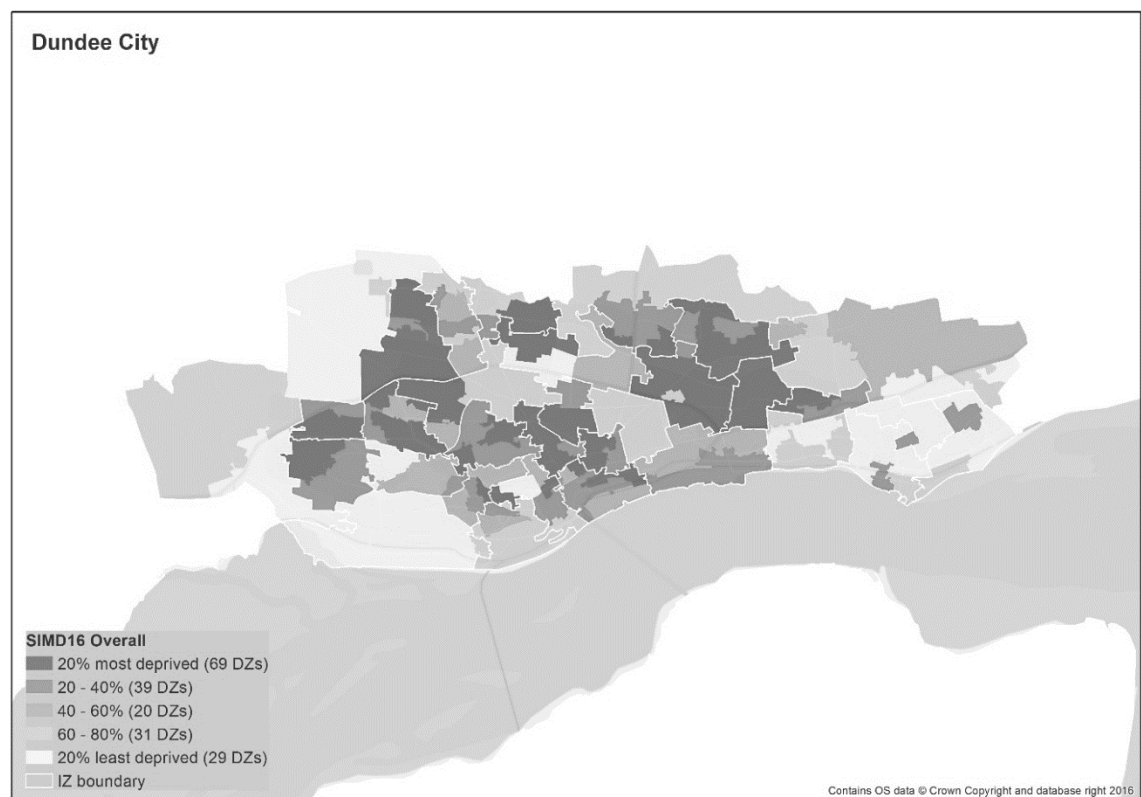
### 1.3.3 Poverty and deprivation in Dundee City

Dundee City is a classic example of a once flourishing industrial city that has suffered the consequences of deindustrialisation. Once famed for its Jute, Jam and Journalism, ship making and whaling industries (Pacione, 1972), the city now houses some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland. In 2012, Dundee City had the third largest percentage of the 15% most deprived data zones <sup>7</sup> in Scotland (SIMD, 2012). A report by the Dundee Fairness Commission (Dundee Partnership, 2016) states that around 30% of the Dundonian population belong to these severely deprived neighbourhoods. In the release of the most recent Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation in 2016, Dundee was reported to have the fifth largest share of the most deprived neighbourhoods.

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<sup>7</sup> Data zones are measurements used in geographical statistical analyses in Scotland by the public and private sector. They are intended to be “large enough that statistics can be presented accurately without fear of disclosure and yet small enough that they can be used to represent communities”, meaning that they represent about 500 to 1000 residents (Scottish Government, 2011)

In 2016, the ten most deprived areas in Dundee City rank between the 36<sup>th</sup> and 201<sup>st</sup> most deprived data zones in Scotland (see Figure 1.2). As a reference, there are 6976 total data zones in Scotland, containing 760 inhabitants on average (Scottish Government, 2016b). This demonstrates that Dundee has comparatively high levels of deprivation. Linlathen and Midcraigie has three of Dundee's most deprived data zones, and the City Centre has two. Whitfield, Linlathen and Midcraigie have consistently been amongst the most deprived 5% in the nation since 2004 (ScotGov, 2019). Many participants of this research reported growing up, or currently living, in the datazones as reported in Table 1.1.



**Figure 1.2 Comparative deprivation rates in Dundee City.**

*Source: Scottish Government, 2016b*



**Table 1.1** Ten most deprived data zones in Dundee City (*Source: Scottish Government, 2016b*)

| Data zone        | Data zone name                | Rank |
|------------------|-------------------------------|------|
| <b>S01007701</b> | City Centre – 01              | 36   |
| <b>S01007801</b> | Linlathen and Midcraigie - 02 | 76   |
| <b>S01007853</b> | Lochee – 04                   | 79   |
| <b>S01007783</b> | Whitfield - 02                | 110  |
| <b>S01007800</b> | Linlathen and Midcraigie - 01 | 121  |
| <b>S01007704</b> | City Centre - 04              | 126  |
| <b>S01007812</b> | Kirkton - 02                  | 129  |
| <b>S01007717</b> | Hilltown – 04                 | 133  |
| <b>S01007722</b> | The Glens - 03                | 197  |
| <b>S01007803</b> | Linlathen and Midcraigie – 04 | 201  |

The map depicted in Figure 1.2 displays that much of the city falls within the 40% most deprived datazones in Scotland, with a considerable number being amongst the 20% most deprived. Deprivation is spread throughout the City, with some concentrations on the City's northern periphery and near the centre. A recent report by the Dundee Partnership (2019a), states that the employment rate in the city lies only at 67%, and 18.5% of those employed are working in jobs that pay below the Living Wage<sup>8</sup>. The purpose of these statistics is to demonstrate that Dundee is a prime case study for researching how to tackle poverty. Because of these high levels of poverty and deprivation, local authorities have implemented strategies which aim to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion within the city. These will be discussed in the following section.

#### 1.3.4 Partnerships and Fairness Commissions

In response to high levels of poverty and deprivation, councils around the UK have adopted a collaborative approach to tackle their respective local issues (Lyall, 2015; Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). Thus, understanding the impact of services on the promotion of social inclusion is important to further developing the strategies

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<sup>8</sup> The Living Wage refers to a measure of minimum income necessary for an employee to be able to afford basic sustenance. This is a campaign advocated through the fairness commissions (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Islington Fairness Commission, 2011; Lyall, 2015)

which aim to promote social and economic inclusion. In an era of welfare issues and sanctions, combined with austerity measures, services have become completely overloaded with responsibility and drained of resources, such as foodbanks, which have struggled to keep up with the high demand (Iafrati, 2016). The concept of fairness commissions encourages local authorities to cooperate with local citizens, businesses and Third Sector organisations over locally specific socioeconomic issues (Lyll, 2015; Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). Many English constituencies have successfully implemented anti-poverty strategies as a result of fairness commissions (Lyll, 2015). Dundee City is the second local authority in Scotland to implement a fairness strategy. The Fairness Strategy of the Dundee Partnership, initiated by key local agencies such as the Dundee City Council, Tayside Police and NHS Tayside, is an action plan which attempts to alleviate poverty and challenge inequalities in the most deprived areas of the city. Its goals are to create a socially and financially inclusive city, as well as to improve health and employability levels (Dundee Partnership, 2012).

Dundee's original Fairness Commission was established in 2012 with the intention of increasing social and economic equality in Dundee. The commission consists of members of local charities and the Dundee Partnership. Together they launched the Dundee Fairness Commission and created the *The Dundee City Fairness Strategy*, which was published in 2012. It outlined the key focus of the commission's intentions for development and the goals it intended to achieve through this. Some of the key targets mentioned were increasing social and economic inclusion, building social capital within communities, encouraging healthy behaviour, and increasing education and employment levels in Dundee (Dundee Partnership, 2012). In 2014, a revised document, called *The Dundee Partnership Fairness Strategy*, was published. The new document included a large-scale profile of poverty and deprivation in Dundee, which included an overview of data from the SIMD as presented in Section 1.3.3. The third and final document to be released by the Dundee Fairness Commission is a document called *A Fair Way to Go*, published in 2016. This document contained a brief profile of poverty in Dundee, a summary of the work carried out by the Fairness Commission, and a large section on research findings and recommendations on various key points, such as stigma, wages and housing. In 2017, the commission was renamed to *Dundee Fighting for Fairness*, which according to its website is different from other

commissions as it has “no agenda, paperwork or action points”. As the website states, the commission constitutes of the following members:

12 people with personal experience of poverty and inequality and 12 people with influence in our city, Community and Civic Commissioners working together as equals (Dundee Fighting for Fairness, 2019).

This highlights a stronger focus on inclusivity and participation. The statements on the website clearly insinuate that the new commission has a stronger community focus than its predecessor.

The development of these commissions demonstrates the City’s growing focus on inclusivity of the community in decision-making processes. Whilst the data for this research was collected prior to the implementation of strategies created by the latter group, *Dundee Fighting for Fairness*, the aim of this research is to uncover how far the *Dundee Fairness Strategy* was able to integrate concerns voiced by the community. A final document was released by the Dundee Partnership in June 2019, named *For fairness in Dundee: an action plan to reduce social inequalities and child poverty in Dundee City*. The title itself signifies the importance given to social inequality and child poverty. The focus on social inequality is mainly about combatting stigma, in part supported by the promotion of social hubs for individuals battling addiction. Understanding the development demonstrates that Dundee has a continually evolving plan to tackling inequality. An underlying theme of tackling social exclusion through increasing social capital is a key theme throughout the reports, yet there are few guidelines how to implement this into practice, other than a focus on reducing stigma. This research sought to uncover whether social inclusion can be affected through service provision.

#### 1.4 Summary of context and research gap

The previous sections have introduced historical, theoretical and political understandings of inequality and partnership working. They have also demonstrated the prevalence of inequality in Scotland and Dundee, and how government initiatives have been attempting to tackle these issues. Whilst Fairness Commissions vary across the UK, at their core lies the creation of locally relevant agendas and increasing multiagency collaboration and partnerships, which include the community in decision-making processes to drive the ideology of fairness (Lyall, 2015). As the

implementation of these strategies is relatively recent, the evidence to support their effectiveness is sparse (this will be elaborated in Section 3.6.3). There is evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of collaboration between organisations and individual elements of service access. For instance, partnership working has been shown to increase operational efficacy through increasing communication between services (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013). This, in turn, has a positive effect on individuals who access services, as an ineffective referral system can cause service users to disengage (Hughes et al., 2019). However, as discussed in Section 1.2.2, power relations between service users and statutory services (Narayan, 2000; Whittle et al., 2017), as well as power relations between statutory services and Third Sector support services (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014; Sinclair et al., 2018) demonstrate that fairness is not necessarily an integral element of partnership working. In order to gain as comprehensive a picture as is possible within the context of a PhD, this research sought to critique the systems of partnership working in order to understand factors that impact both service users and service provision from a micro (individual) and macro (social and institutional) sociological perspective. This research provides an empirical contribution to our understanding of effective poverty reduction and social inclusion strategies.

In terms of national and international applicability of this study, methodological and theoretical implications can be drawn, which will be outlined in the following section (Section 1.5). Whilst being part-funded by Dundee City Council, which is part of the Dundee Partnership and thus, the Fairness Commission, it is important to note that this collaboration did not affect the credibility of these results. The researcher took measures to conduct this research uninfluenced by any of her own or other predispositions, which are detailed explicitly in the methodology chapter of this thesis (see Chapter 4). This research seeks to question all angles of a partnership-focussed strategy. The City of Dundee will act as a case study to the many other Scottish and wider British cities suffering from high levels of poverty and deprivation. This research in turn will feed into debates on poverty and inequality.

## 1.5 Methodological approach, research aim and objectives, and research questions

The key aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how poverty and social exclusion are impacted through social services, partnership working, and wider support networks and how this relates to theories of inequality. In order to achieve this aim, this research created a holistic understanding of the interactions that affect wider social and economic inequality. The research is led by the following objectives:

### **Objective 1**

- Identify the types of poverty and social exclusion which exist within Dundee City and set them into the wider theoretical context of inequality,

### **Objective 2**

- Evaluate how services aim to support their clients/service users, what effect this had on the manifestations of inequality as experienced by the service users, and what structural barriers exist to effective service provision,

### **Objective 3**

- Explore how services work in partnership with one another and evaluate the effect this has on service provision and, consequently, on the experiences of service users,

### **Objective 4**

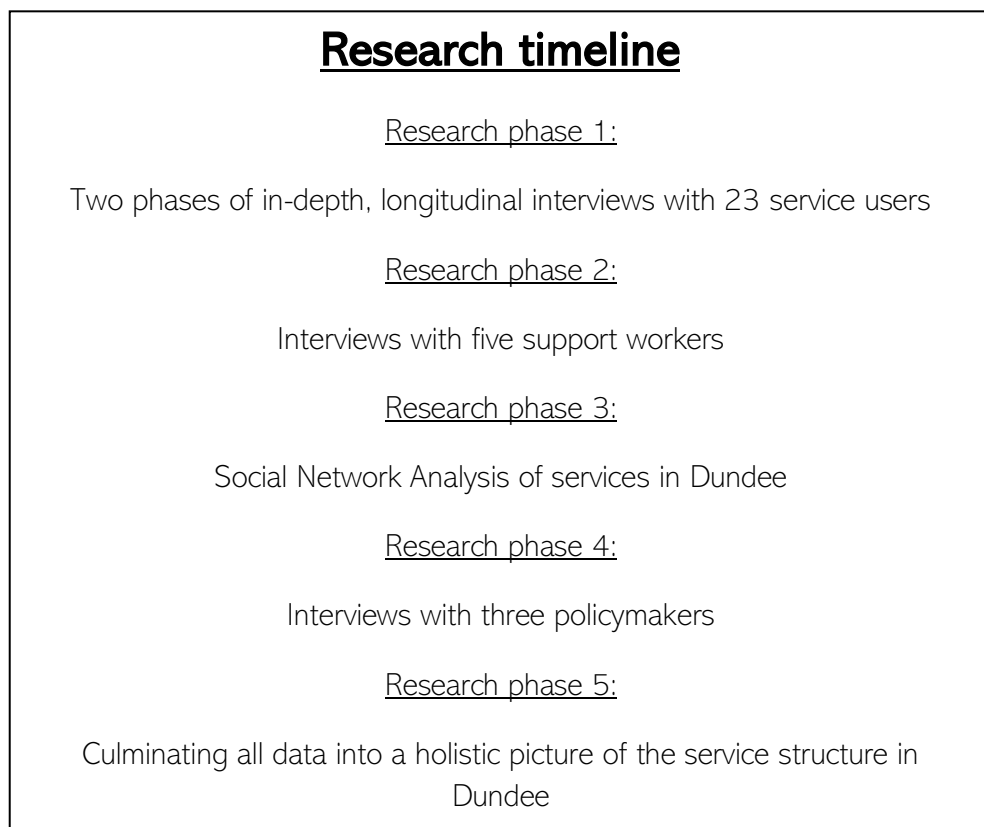
- Analyse the complexity of factors which influence the reduction or increase of economic and social inequality and understand what role services play within this process,

### **Objective 5**

- Develop evidence-led best practice solutions towards more effective ways of tackling poverty and social exclusion and improve service provision and engagement.

Initially, the research sought to only interview service users about their experiences with the effects of inequality and how service provision impacted their experiences.

Whilst this research focused primarily on the lived experiences of the service users, the researcher also interviewed service providers and policymakers to understand the wider processes that influence service provision. This research is led by a critical phenomenological approach to enable participants to voice their concerns, which was chosen specifically as poverty is characterised by a powerlessness and voicelessness in wider society (Narayan, 2000). This research also applies the unique approach of using critical systems thinking (see Section 4.3.1) to gain a holistic understanding of how inequality can be re-evaluated within the context of partnership working. Figure 1.3 provides an in-depth overview of the research timeline.



**Figure 1.3** Research timeline

The following paragraphs will introduce the research questions and how this research will answer these questions. A full description of the methodology can be found in Chapter 4.

### **Research question 1**

**How is poverty and social exclusion experienced by individuals in Dundee?**

**What are the socioeconomic factors that contribute to these experiences?**

There is a debate between theorists about whether poverty is caused by individual or socioeconomic factors (see Section 2.10). By conducting a series of in-depth longitudinal interviews aimed at examining the life experiences of individuals, the participants are able to provide a background to their current circumstances and keep the researcher informed of any circumstantial changes in the follow-up interviews. This is aimed at providing a detailed insight into the factors that were responsible for the inequalities experienced by the participants. Interviews were led with the leading statement: “Tell me about yourself”. This encouraged individuals to give an account of the details of their background and life story they deemed relevant to this research. As the interviews were delivered on an unstructured basis, follow-up questions probed themes presented by the service users as to provide an in-depth account of the causes and consequences of the individuals’ circumstances. The longitudinal element of this research phase contributes to the understanding of how circumstantial changes affect individuals’ lives. This element of the research is aimed at providing a rich account of the individuals’ circumstantial changes, in order to provide a more detailed insight into the long-term effects of specific experiences and occurrences within the individuals’ lives. One of the most significant contributions of this research is the finding that no matter the measure taken by the individuals to secure a financially stable future, for example undertaking higher education or climbing the employment ladder, the individuals struggled to escape poverty after having experienced a traumatic life event. Whether this life event was a redundancy, bereavement, abuse, or the development of physical or mental illness which resulted in the loss of employment, the participants were often in such a vulnerable state that the loss of their source of income only further diminished their wellbeing.

## **Research question 2**

### **How is poverty managed by individuals? What role do services play within this process?**

This question naturally follows the previous question. After having investigated how inequalities have manifested themselves within the lives of the individuals, this research question sought out to explore how individuals create networks of support, whether through services or otherwise. Previous research indicates that individuals experience shame as a result of long-term stigmatisation through wider society (Lister, 2015). However, social networks have been found to be beneficial in contributing to higher levels of wellbeing and feelings of security and acceptance (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). This research sought out to identify whether and how individuals have these types of social networks, or whether they derive other types of support from service provision. Policies, such as the Dundee Fairness Strategy, focus on the reduction of social exclusion as well as the reduction of poverty (Dundee Partnership, 2012). As social exclusion is characterised by a lack of engagement with wider society and institutions (Pierson, 2002), this research sought out to investigate whether and how individuals interact with these wider social networks. The coping strategies used by individuals to manage their everyday lives is an element that emerged from initial interviews and was strengthened through narratives on changes in attitudes and circumstances that emerged from the follow-up interviews. Whilst the longitudinal element was not a necessary component to answering this question, it shed some light on strategies that helped the individuals on a long-term basis. The exploration of coping mechanisms by individuals considered to be in poverty has demonstrated an alternative understanding of social capital. Previous theories on social capital have argued that individuals who lack economic capital are likely to lack social capital (Putnam, 1999; Bourdieu, 1986). The findings of this research demonstrate how individuals, who sought help from services after facing extreme inequalities and becoming severely excluded from wider society, came together in solidarity to create support networks of peers. Whilst in some cases, the access to these networks did result in quantifiable individual effects, such as gaining paid employment in the organisations individuals attended as service users, the motivations for engaging in these positions were driven from a point of solidarity, rather than individualism. These findings will be outlined in Chapter 7.



### **Research question 3**

**How do service providers design service provision to support service users?**

**What structural barriers exist that limit effective service provision?**

To answer the question on how service provision is carried out, the research adopts a holistic approach to understand service provision from multiple levels. This is the research question that will most benefit from having the perspectives of the individuals making the decisions (the policymakers), the individuals carrying out these decisions (the support workers), and the individuals affected by the decisions (the service users). Having access to these different perspectives on services will offer great insight into what one actor may consider useful but may be a hindrance to another. By comparing these views, it is hoped to gain a rounded insight into the functioning of service provision and better understand where improvements could be made. This links into the second part of this question, which investigates structural barriers to effective service provision. The insights mainly came from the interviews with support workers and policymakers, but some significant structural barriers, such as a lack of funding for certain organisations, were observed by service users.

### **Research question 4**

**What does partnership working mean in practice? How do organisations work in partnership with one another?**

This question seeks to provide an account of the efficiency of partnership working in accomplishing the Fairness Strategy's goals. The Dundee Fairness Strategy sets guidelines for increasing partnership working citywide between multiple agencies and focusses on an inclusion of Third Sector actors in the provision of services (Dundee Partnership, 2012). The reality of partnership working will be displayed through a holistic, mixed-methods approach of the Social Network Analysis (SNA), focussing specifically on service user referrals, and the qualitative data gained through interviews with support workers and policymakers. The SNA shines a light on the connections that organisations have built one with one another, whilst the interviews will give some details on how these relationships are built and maintained, and the structural barriers hinder effective service provision. The SNA uses a quantitative approach set within a wider qualitative framework. The purpose of this is to provide

an insight into key players within the network to identify power relations within the wider network. The answer to this research question contributes to an understanding of the benefits of partnership working. Whilst partnership working provided substantial benefits towards service provision, such as increased coordination and communication, significant power disparities were detected between actors who directly aligned with partnerships or local authorities and those who acted as independent organisations (see Section 6.4). Previous research has attributed power disparities within partnerships to a suffocation of innovative and alternative service provision, that could drive social change (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014; Sinclair et al., 2018). The data obtained through the critical systems approach of this research will show the multiple layers of influences which impact how services are provided. A combination of national legislative and structural forces affects the efficacy of how services operate. Austerity measures and the neoliberal system of funding bodies (will be elaborated in Section 6.3.2) are found to be the most detrimental to service provision that benefits service users.

### **Research question 5**

#### **What strategies might be developed by individuals and services to mediate poverty and social exclusion? Can these reduce wider inequality?**

This research question aims to fulfil the fifth research objective of providing evidence-led suggestions for best practice. The answer to this question is based on direct findings from the interviews and a reflection of the previous four research questions. The previous research questions demonstrate the consequences of socioeconomic inequality faced by individuals within wider society through economic disadvantages, stigmatisation and intersectional inequalities, but also demonstrate inequalities exhibited between different service types within partnerships. This final research question helps to draw these findings together to discuss ways of overcoming these inequalities. These inequalities are discussed throughout the findings chapters and are summarised within the conclusion in Chapter 8.

### 1.6 Roadmap of thesis chapters

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, two chapters of literature review will summarise relevant research to this study. Both

classic and contemporary literature will provide a context for this research. **Chapter 2**, which is the first of two literature review chapters, focuses on inequality. It is subsectioned into theories on inequality and poverty, explaining what the difference is between the two concepts and why this is relevant. This chapter includes a larger amount of classical social theory on inequality, providing a journey of how our understanding of inequality in society has changed in the past few centuries. Understanding how we conceptualise poverty and inequality will provide a context to how and why we attempt to tackle it. The chapter sets the context for how inequality is framed within this research.

The second literature review chapter (**Chapter 3**) will look at modern poverty alleviation strategies. Whilst Chapter 2 includes much classic social theory, this third chapter includes mainly contemporary social theory. The aim of this chapter is to provide a walkthrough of the evidence provided by academic literature on the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies.

**Chapter 4** describes the methodology used in this study. It will discuss the methodological framework, including its ontology and epistemology, to give an understanding of why the research mainly focusses on qualitative interviews. Then, it will then discuss the research design by explaining in detail how interviews were conducted and with whom, and how the network analysis was conducted. Due to the sensitive nature of the interview topics, particularly those with service users, the chapter includes an in-depth discussion of ethical considerations.

Following this, **Chapter 5** will be the first of three findings and discussion chapters. It will focus on representations of inequality uncovered through this research, focussing mainly on interviews with services users and their experiences of poverty. It will discuss some key themes brought up by the participants, such as upbringing, traumatic life events, financial issues, welfare and social networks. These will be discussed within the context of previous literature on the subject.

**Chapter 6** will present the findings on service provision and partnership working. It will review the experiences of service users and support workers and discuss which types of service provision were effective and which were not. This includes looking at barriers to service provision. Both service users and policymakers have provided some insight into the decision-making processes which drives or hinders service provision.

This is particularly relevant for the effectiveness of partnership working. The Social Network Analysis in combination with the participant interviews will provide a detailed account of how partnership working takes place within the city.

**Chapter 7** will draw upon findings from the previous two chapters. It will present an element of this research which became the most prevalent discovery upon analysis, which is the existence of ‘hidden communities’. These ‘hidden communities’ are networks individuals have established as a means of support. During times in which the individuals were extremely isolated and faced severe poverty, they accessed community-type services (e.g. community soup kitchens, peer support groups) as a means of support. In these organisations, they connected with peers and created networks of solidarity, giving them agency to overcome the effects of inequality and engage with the community.

**Chapter 8** will be the conclusion of this research. The chapter will reiterate the main findings of the research and further explore their implications for theory and practice. Finally, the chapter will look at the limitations present in this research, how these could be overcome, and discuss ideas for future research. This will conclude the thesis.

## 2 Inequality and poverty

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at the most relevant classical and contemporary social theories on inequality and poverty. It will start with a historical account of poverty and the theories surrounding poverty to provide a background to the theories of inequality in modern times. Section 2.3 will elaborate how hierarchies have developed throughout history and how they have ingrained themselves into society. This will lead onto a discussion of how the rise of capitalism shaped modern inequality (Section 2.4) and how the growth of a global capitalist economy has widened the gap between those with the most and the fewest resources (Section 2.5). This sets the scene for the global developments which make poverty possible. Section 2.6 will discuss contemporary literature on income inequality, identifying key theories on how income inequality is measured. The following section (Section 2.7) will discuss the wider impacts inequality has on individuals in Britain. It will look at the multiple ways in which inequalities manifest themselves into the lives of individuals, including homelessness, mental illness and substance use issues. Section 2.8 will look at a key representation of inequality as discussed in this research: poverty. The following two sections will elaborate why this thesis chooses to research ‘inequality’ over ‘poverty’ (Section 2.9) and discuss theories on the causes of poverty (Section 2.10). Poverty has previously been linked to a lack of social networks (Putnam, 1995; Hall, 1999). Section 2.11 will discuss the theories around the concept of social capital, which also links to social and institutional trust, social exclusion and stigma. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of theories on whether poverty is reinforced through geography or generational effects, hereby discussing the existence of social mobility (Section 2.12). The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of why inequality exists in the context of capitalism and how this is reflected in the United Kingdom. This will frame the experiences of the service users who participated in this research and help to contextualise the complexities of inequalities that the individuals face on a day-to-day basis.

## 2.2 Background

Despite the United Kingdom being a developed Western nation, inequalities within the country are rife. On the one hand, homelessness and unemployment have been increasing rapidly since 2008, whilst on the other hand, the wealthiest individuals in the country steadily continue to increase in prosperity (Brewer and Wren-Lewis, 2016). Whilst inequality can refer to income inequality, it is also reflected in other aspects of social life, such as education and healthcare (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Social inequalities have manifested themselves in society through years of cultural practices. A society can be considered to harbour inequality, when one group of individuals can reap certain advantages (i.e. economic, legal and social opportunities) over another group. In essence, the term signifies an unequal distribution of resources (Sen, 1999). The creation and maintenance of this unequal distribution of resources amongst different members of society has been attributed to many factors including economics, justice, religion and culture among others. Whilst inequalities can be measured in objective terms<sup>9</sup>, it is often socially constructed categorisations which are used to define those who can access certain resources and privileges, as well as those who are denied them. One common way that individuals belonging to these social groups receive their designation is at birth, thus through their ancestry and lineage. Some of the characteristics which are correlated with an individual's socioeconomic position include the socioeconomic position of the individuals' parents (individuals with parents from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to be wealthy in adulthood and vice versa) and geographic location of upbringing (individuals who are raised in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty and deprivation are likely to remain in poverty throughout adulthood) (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Peet, 1975). Though individuals have no control over these factors, they can contribute to a lifetime of disadvantages. Social hierarchies of advantage and disadvantage have nevertheless succeeded in becoming part of the majority of modern civilisations (Dorling, 2014). Why and how these social orders have ingrained themselves into society is a complex procedure whereby multiple explanations have evolved from various disciplines. This chapter will provide a historical account of theories which elaborate how these inequalities have come to being in modern Britain to provide context for the poverty

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<sup>9</sup> Wealth distribution continuums, access to healthcare/education/etc. See Section 2.7 for more information.

and social exclusion which is experienced by individuals from deprived communities in Dundee.

### 2.3 The development of hierarchical society

Anthropological and archaeological research supports the theory that inequality is a phenomenon that has emerged through processes of civilisation and may not have been present in prehistoric civilizations. Understanding these developments can give an insight into how inequality is sustained through modern socioeconomic structures. Ancient hunter-gatherer societies are thought to have been egalitarian, meaning that resources were distributed uniformly amongst all members of the community. Agriculture, clan wars and religion are some of the factors thought to have played a role in the development of a hierarchical society. For example, many societies, such as the ancient Natives of North America and the Ao Naga of New Guinea, initially held hierarchies based on achievement. A considerable contribution had to be made to the clan, for instance by acquiring certain resources or passing initiation ceremonies. Initially these hierarchies were not hereditary, meaning that a higher position in the hierarchy had to be earned rather than solely being ascribed at birth. In these societies, the living were surpassed in hierarchy only by their gods or their ancestors. However, some societies altered their social structure by introducing the concept of hereditary privilege. This signified that clan members could be born into a lifetime of unequal opportunities for the first time in history. Leaders justified the transition by claiming they had a special relationship to deities and the supernatural and were thus higher in status themselves (Flannery and Marcus, 2012). Flannery and Marcus (2012) argued that the claim of divine rights to the throne is one which continued throughout history into the feudal era and, in some cases, into modernity. Whilst these systems for the transmission of social status have their roots in these early civilisations, the maintenance of inequality and hereditary privilege in modernity has been attributed to the established social order of feudalism and capitalism (Marx, 1847). In capitalism, as in earlier societies, hereditary wealth is still very much present (Moltchanova, 2010). What this brief historical account shows is that inequalities have relatively recently established themselves through disputable reasoning. This demonstrates that the way in which inequality has manifested itself within the UK, which ultimately affects poverty levels in deprived neighbourhoods such as those in Dundee City, is a

fragile concept and potentially reversible. The following section will discuss the development of economic capital through our modern economic system.

## 2.4 The rise of capitalism and how it shaped modern inequality

In the late eighteenth century, Western Europe, including the United Kingdom, was undergoing fundamental social changes. The French Revolution, symbolic for the uprising of suppressed farmers, triggered the replacement of feudalism with capitalism, thus shifting from a system ruled by royalty to a system ruled by business owners. The Enlightenment encouraged a shift of framing social norms and knowledge through science instead of faith (Marx, 1847). This allowed those individuals who were privileged enough to become academic thinkers to become reflective of the socioeconomic changes in writings. Whilst the French Revolution aimed to free the poor from the rule of the wealthy, it soon came to be seen that whilst power relations shifted, the masses were nonetheless kept in impoverished circumstances. Despite an increase in production levels through the effects of capitalism, wages remained stagnant and low (Engels, 1984). This was a concern strongly expressed in the emerging social sciences, as a noticeable population growth would need to be met by an increase in production. In order to put these concerns into context, academics started developing theories linking the study of population with the study of trade.

Following the Industrial Revolution, scepticism of capitalism as a functioning economy continued to be reflected in social theory. Marxist theory represents the view that economic inequality is inherent to capitalist societies. In his original writings, Karl Marx (1847), who lived shortly after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and is considered a leading sociologist on economic inequality, heavily condemned the effect of capitalism on power relations between workers and employers. The metaphorical base and superstructure theory discuss how the “mode of production”, i.e. the production goods and relations between producer and recipient that construct the economy, directly steers the politics and culture of a society. Though he criticised feudalism for its power relations, the nature of capitalism lies at the heart of his writings. He describes the industrial mode of production as commodifying and therefore objectifying the workforce, as the worker functions as capital to the employer. Through the introduction of machinery, the role of the manufacturer shifted from actively producing products, to becoming a cog in the machine. The profits which



are accumulated as a result of this process are not redistributed to the worker but are accumulated by the capitalist (i.e. factory owner), leading to an increasingly imbalanced distribution of wealth. As a solution, Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* proposing socialism as a solution to alleviating the unjust treatment of the workers (Marx and Engels, 1848). They believed that a revolution of the proletariat was an inevitable result of the economic relations and conditions of the workforce.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marx's writings inspired a strain of social theory called "critical theory", which adopted a similar critique of capitalism, yet applied it to modern economic developments. As the name itself proclaims, it is a strand of social theory which critiques the cultural, ideological and institutional structures. The economy plays a major role in their critique of society (Calhoun et al., 2007). In *One Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse (1964) strongly criticised the rise of a culture fixated on consumerism, which he blames for the lack of incentive towards a working-class revolution. He believed that the commercialisation of commodities led to the glorification of said products (e.g. clothing, cars), many of which are obtained as a sort of status symbol. The illusion of freedom of choice to buy these products leads an individual to believe they are solely acquiring items necessary to be an accepted member of society, whilst actively contributing to the increasing profits of the upper class. Marcuse describes the post-industrial economy as "free competition among unequally equipped economic subjects". This quote amply encapsulates how economic opportunities may seem readily available to all, whilst strict barriers hinder individuals from accessing the same resources as their fellow citizens. This links into the concept of elitism, which is introduced in Section 2.7.1 and is held responsible for creating discriminatory attitudes towards individuals in poverty. This research will discuss how these attitudes correlate with structural barriers within society that inhibit the reduction of poverty, as experienced by participants within this research. The following section will discuss historical research investigating the links between economic developments and levels of inequality.

## 2.5 Economic growth and inequality

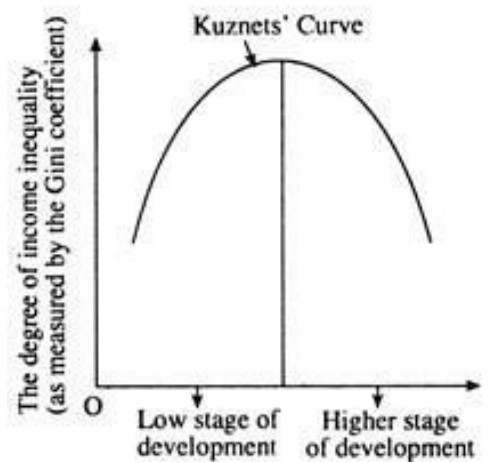
The relationship between new modes of production, capitalism and economic growth was at the centre of writings by Adam Smith. His book, the *Wealth of Nations* (1776)

pioneered economic thinking. His book was written during the early stages of capitalism, prior to the Industrial Revolution. The relationship between new modes of production, economic growth and individual wealth lies at the heart of his writings. He described a division of labour as one of the main drivers of economic growth. In the pre-Industrial Revolution era, machinery and mass production were in very early stages. Smith (1776) observed that, instead of one person completing the entire manufacturing process, individuals were assigned a single task to be continuously repeated. The repetitive nature of this assembly line-style work allowed production to be completed much faster and more efficiently than ever before. Whilst he could not at this stage predict the implications of this type of work on individuals' wages, he did suggest that these monotonous tasks could lead to high rates of employee dissatisfaction, eventually leading to a conflict between the employer and the employee. However, he believed this dispute would be settled through the introduction of a wage that would allow the worker an acceptable standard of living. In essence, his writings underline the conundrum of economic growth in the Industrial era. The workers were exploited through working low-paying jobs at an increasingly faster pace yet receiving no gratuity for their increase in production. He also could not foresee that the preference of assembly line work would result in independent workmen soon losing their share in property and business, whilst small scale labourers would abandon their own businesses to work in large-scale factories (Engels, 1984). Despite recognising flaws in the capitalist system, Smith (1776) believed that the conflict between employer and employee would be resolved through the employer offering a higher wage. However, the issue of low paid or unstable employment, as well as a lack of regulations still pertain to this day (Bailey, 2016; Carlin, 2019), as experienced by some of the participants of this research (see Section 5.3.4.3). The lack of regulated employment can have detrimental impacts on levels of poverty, as people can become repeatedly unemployed or be affected from in-work poverty through the provision of low wages (Bailey, 2016). There are further factors which impact the lack of regulated employment, such as when governments focus too strongly on reducing unemployment statistics through any means necessary (Payne, 2017). This will be elaborated further in Section 3.3. Understanding how unregulated employment contributes to levels of poverty can help to understand the structural barriers which keep individuals in poverty. Smith's (1776) theory furthermore anticipated an eventual decline of the manufacturing industry, which he believed would result in economic

upheaval during the transitional period to a new economy. This could explain the high levels of poverty and deprivation experienced by Dundee City as a post-industrial city, previously dominated by the manufacturing industry (Pacione, 1972) to a city now dominated by public (e.g. healthcare and education) and service sectors (Dundee City Council, 2016), setting the scene for understanding the poverty and deprivation experienced by the participants of this study. The following section will further discuss how employment and income contribute to inequality.

## 2.6 Empirical studies on contemporary income inequality

Though classical theories have contributed greatly to modern understanding of society, few of them have had access to empirical resources and were therefore based mainly on theory (Piketty, 2014). Simon Kuznets (1955) was one of the first theorists to use extensive empirical data to analyse economic inequality. To measure levels of inequality, Kuznets (1955) compared national U.S. income with data on individual income tax returns. From the results of his comparison, he created the “Kuznets curve” (see Figure 2.1), a bell-shaped curve depicting the supposed increase and decrease of inequality following the introduction of a new industry.



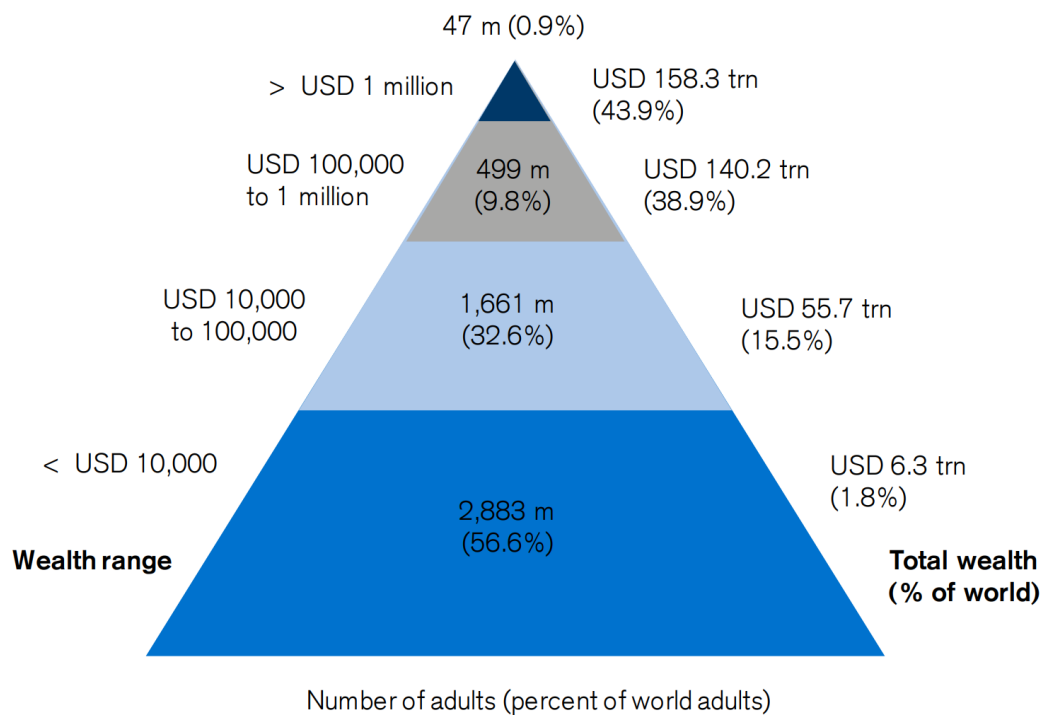
**Figure 2.1** Kuznets curve  
Source: *Economics Discussion*, 2019

It asserted that following industrialisation, inhabitants of the countryside will relocate into cities to seek employment. During this time of relocation, the levels of unemployment will increase, giving way to a surge in income inequality. Similar to 18<sup>th</sup>-century theorist Smith (1776), his theory hypothesised that inequality would eventually drop once the economy had fully developed. The empirical data used in this study did indeed show this precise bell-curve flow of income inequality in the U.S. Although Kuznets advanced understanding of inequalities through empirical measurement, his work has been subsequently criticised for not taking the post-war economy into consideration, which as Piketty (2014) argues was largely responsible for the reduction in economic inequality.

Just over a decade after Kuznets released his theory, empirical data was released that provided evidence of social barriers to an adequate income. Blau and Duncan (1967) conducted longitudinal statistical analysis of complex individual factors, such as ethnicity, education and occupational status of the father. They concluded that great differences in wealth and opportunities exist within society. The greatest difference was observed between those born into “blue collar” families (e.g. parents working in manual labour) and those born into “white collar” families (i.e. parents working in executive positions) (p.188). These differences were not only observed at birth, but the lack of opportunities present throughout adulthood for those born into families living in deprived circumstances was readily apparent. Kuznets’s ideas informed further analysis which also took into consideration the spatial distribution of inequalities. Richard Peet (1975) was one of the first theorists to investigate the relationship between inequality and human geography. As human geography is a relatively young area of social science, many of its theories build upon classical social theory. Due to the nature of the discipline, human geographers look at relationships between space and society. Using the U.S. as a case study, Peet (1975) found that the stratification of neighbourhood communities reinforced class hierarchies. Inhabitants of certain geographic areas were more prone to social and economic disadvantages. Predominantly cities which were struggling from post-industrial consequences tended to have higher rates of citizens living in impoverished circumstances. Despite Peet’s study being produced almost five decades prior to the current study, effects of post-industrialisation are still apparent in post-industrial Dundee to this date. Whilst some company closures are still affecting the loss of manufacturing jobs in the city, such as the closure of the Michelin factory scheduled for mid-2020 (Keith, 2019), the city has diversified its economy by branching out to health and social care, creative and educational industries to become more resilient to economic impacts in future (Clark et al., 2016). Nevertheless, Dundee is still one of the most deprived cities in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016c). Thus, understanding how inequalities develop and manifest is imperative for setting the framework for this research.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the spatial aspects of inequalities and economic relations have become much more complex. As corporations grow globally, management structures become vaster. This has resulted in far higher corporate revenue than was considered imaginable in the 1800s. The diversified management

structure of companies has likewise resulted in a more complex stratification of social class. Globalisation allowed corporations to grow beyond national borders. It drove the relocation of the manufacturing industry to developing countries, whilst the tertiary sector took over as the main employer of the Western world. This process deepened the inequalities between developed and developing nations (Esping-Andersen, Assimakopoulou and van Kersbergen, 1993). However, globalisation has also contributed to the rise of inequality within developed nations. The rising service industry in the Western world is less represented by workers' unions, which ensured fair treatment of employees within the manufacturing sector in countries such as the UK. As a result, there are grave discrepancies in income levels between workers within the tertiary sector, driving income inequality within developed nations (Milanovic, 2016).



**Figure 2.2** Distribution of global wealth by capital

*Source: Davies, Lluberas and Shorrocks, 2019, p.9*

On a global level, economic inequality is still highly prevalent despite an increase in production. Differences in wealth are reflected in geographic location (e.g. neighbourhoods, countries) (Peet, 1975), but also through individual factors, such as ethnicity, education levels and health (Blau and Duncan, 1967) (see Section 2.7 for

further graphs). Though industrialisation and globalisation have resulted in an increase of the availability and quantity of resources, these resources are disproportionately available to the global population. The global wealth distribution is highly unequal. Figure 2.2 pictures the distribution of global wealth in 2019. It shows that most of the world's population (56.6%) owns relatively little wealth, at 1.8% of the planet's wealth and a range of less than 10,000 USD. On the other hand, just under half (43.9%) of the entire planet's wealth belongs to less than 1% (0.9%) of the global population, at a range of over a million USD. This increasingly wide distribution range has become one of the main concerns of 21<sup>st</sup>-century research on inequality. With the help of large datasets, statistical software and a team of researchers, Thomas Piketty (2014) conducted an international study, looking at decades of trends in individual capital and income. Differentiating between income inequality (i.e. the amount of money accumulated annually) and wealth inequality (i.e. the total amount of wealth owned), Piketty found that inequality has soared dramatically since the 1970s. Analysis of income inequality shows that the top decile (10%) is becoming increasingly more detached from those on the lower spectrum, in particular the wealthiest 0.1%. Wealth inequality shows that the top 1% is steadily accumulating more capital, whilst the lowest third owns virtually zero percent of all asset-based wealth<sup>10</sup>. The process is creating an increasingly vital cause for preventing and overturning the injustices to those with limited access to resources. Piketty suggested a global governmental intervention to slow the rising rates of inequality by introducing a tax on the super-rich, which is to be redistributed amongst the masses. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, further developments are necessary to combat inequality as much as possible. In this study, only those on the lower ends of the inequality spectrum are visible, so it may seem that poverty and deprivation are isolated issues. Understanding that the poverty and deprivation experienced not only by participants of this research, but also by many others in Britain (as will be detailed in the following section), is caused by an unequal distribution of wealth across social groups will lead to understanding that poverty alleviation tactics alone will never solve the causes of poverty. These are rooted within national and international socioeconomic structures and must therefore be targeted through groups which are more powerful than

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<sup>10</sup> See Section 3.4 for further information on assets

researched within the context of this study. The following section will discuss research on how those on the lower end of the inequality spectrum are affected by deprivation.

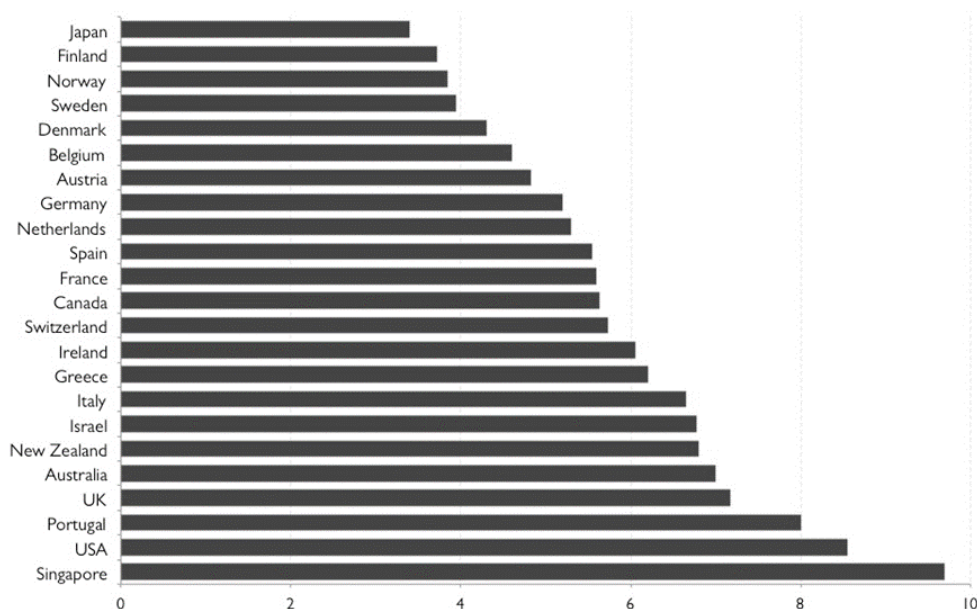
## 2.7 Deprivation and its effects in contemporary Britain

### 2.7.1 Overview

Modern inequality is not just reflected through the distribution of wealth, but it is also reflected through differences in access to public goods, life expectancy, health, and, generally, chances towards socially acceptable living conditions. In their book the *Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2009) conducted an extensive analysis on how inequalities and social ills have developed within and between Western countries. Despite great economic growth, some of the wealthiest countries scored poorest in social inequalities.

The problems in rich countries are not caused by the society not being rich enough (or even by being too rich) but by the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is where we stand in relation to others in our own society. (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, p.25)

How much richer are the richest 20% than the poorest 20%?



**Figure 2.3** Income inequality by nation states

Source: Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009

Income inequality is the standard measure to understanding unequal distribution of resources within a society. Measured by income inequality, the United Kingdom was found to be one of the most unequal nations on the planet (see Figure 2.3). However, income is insufficient for measuring inequality alone, as it does not account for social factors which could prevent an individual's full participation in social and economic activities. Someone with a low income in a country which provides socialised healthcare and education may rank similarly to an individual with high income in a nation with costly privatised healthcare and education. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) compiled a list of factors which were found to be particularly affected by inequality:

- Level of trust
- Mental illness (including drug and alcohol addiction)
- Life expectancy and infant mortality
- Obesity
- Children's educational performance
- Teenage births
- Homicides
- Imprisonment rates
- Social mobility (p.19).

Though these factors are not necessarily related to social class or income, the authors found that income inequality was strongly correlated with these particular social inequalities. For instance, in the UK, individuals born into a working-class family background are more likely to be incarcerated for a minor crime, such as shoplifting. These crimes could be carried out as a direct result of low income, for instance as a means to feed their families. Individuals from deprived backgrounds are more likely to be obese, which is a result of the lack of access to healthy food and directly linked to cardiovascular disease. They are less likely to attain a high level of education, as they are often forced to prematurely end high school in favour of employment. This evidence shows that even in the United Kingdom, individuals are deprived of their rights, based solely on circumstances they have no control over.

Wilkinson and Pickett's (2009) data demonstrates that many people are negatively impacted by the effects of inequality. This raises the question of how and why inequality is still present in wealthy countries such as the UK. Danny Dorling (2015)



has recently investigated inequality within the UK and has provided an overview of the social conditions which prevent the reduction of national inequality. Elitism is stated as the main reason for the preservation of inequality in Britain, alongside the illusion of a meritocratic society and ingrained societal prejudices. In essence, false information and prejudice has ingrained itself into everyday discourse, allowing elitism to be justified by the very people suffering from its consequences. The existence of stigma towards individuals in poverty, in particular the predisposition towards individuals which holds them responsible for their malaise, is incredibly damaging towards those who suffer from it and is a great barrier towards tackling poverty (see Section 2.11.3). This research sought to uncover whether local strategies which aim to change this stigmatised discourse and the consequent negative treatment of individuals in poverty were successful in doing so. However, there were further issues the participants faced which subjected them to stigmatisation (see Section 2.11.3 for more literature on stigma). The following three sections will focus on homelessness, substance use, and mental illness. This research hopes to contextualise experiences of these issues within the wider framework of experiences of inequality. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to include individual sections discussing how they relate to and represent poverty and deprivation.

### 2.7.2 Homelessness

Homelessness can be viewed as one of the most severe representations of poverty and deprivation, as individuals who are homeless tend to have no financial or physical resources and have little to no social networks (Kuhn and Aalhane, 1998). In the UK, the homelessness charity Shelter reported 300,000 individuals<sup>11</sup> as homeless in November 2017, which is the equivalent of 0.5% of the UK population (Shelter, 2017). Homelessness can be visible in the shape of “rough sleeping”, meaning individuals who sleep in public, but most individuals who are homeless sleep in temporary accommodation provided by charities (Shelter, 2017). This figure is estimated to have increased from 1768 rough sleepers in 2010 to 4751 in 2017 (Fransham and Dorling, 2018), which means that the number has nearly tripled. The following section will introduce some theories on why homelessness exists.

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<sup>11</sup> This figure does not include individuals who are “couchsurfing” at friends or families houses temporarily, which the charity estimates could make up 14% of the entire population (Shelter, 2017: 3).

A hypothesis supported by comparative researchers states that countries with high levels of welfare tend to have lower rates of homelessness overall, whilst complex needs are likely to be highly correlated with homelessness. Countries with less structured social security systems tend to have higher rates of homelessness as the cause is attributed to housing affordability (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015). A study by Fransham and Dorling (2018) identified both the increase of housing prices in the UK and the implementation of the welfare reforms (described in Section 1.3.2), as well as the rise in austerity measures, which cut funding from vital homelessness services, as being significant drivers for the increase in homelessness in the UK. The authors state that the increase in homelessness is “almost entirely accounted for by an increase in families losing their privately rented housing” (p.1). The vulnerability of being homeless has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Homelessness is highly correlated with physical ill health, mental illness and substance use. Because of these factors, individuals who experience homelessness have a life expectancy which is 30 years less than the general population (Webb et al., 2018). Homelessness can take many different shapes. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) categorised homelessness into a three-tier typology: transitionally homeless (i.e. temporarily after an emergency before accessing accommodation), episodically homeless (i.e. frequent short bouts of homelessness) and chronically homeless (i.e. long-term homelessness) (pp.210-211). They found that transitional homelessness was the most common type of homelessness. It was a common occurrence for individuals who had experienced an emergency and needed temporary shelter. Individuals who were episodically homeless often had chaotic backgrounds and alternated between sheltered housing, rough sleeping and incarceration. The chronically homeless group was considered to be the most vulnerable as they had many associated issues, such as mental illness and substance dependency. The following sections will focus on these two issues in relation to poverty.

### 2.7.3 Mental illness

Mental illness is highly correlated with severe poverty and deprivation. In the study which created the typology of homelessness mentioned in section 2.7.2, 83% of the chronically homeless and 66% of episodically homeless were either diagnosed with mental illness or had a substance abuse problem (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998). The difficulty in researching this topic is that social isolation, extreme poverty and severe

mental illness are correlated, but determining the causation in such complexly interrelated phenomena is extremely complicated. Conflicting theories on the topic exist. Social drift theories suggest that social isolation in individuals with severe mental illness is a leading factor in poverty (Topor et al., 2014, in: Ljungqvist et al., 2015), whereas social causation theories state that mental illness is caused by the effects of poverty (Hanson et al., 2002, in: Ljungqvist et al., 2015). Studies led by the social drift theories have suggested employing community psychologists, who would take into consideration the social problems of the local area when treating patients (Sylvestre et al., 2018). Being led by values of community empowerment and social justice, the psychologists could help to inform policy by consulting policymakers on specific issues surrounding housing, unemployment, food, and more. Other studies have suggested subsidising therapy, which can be quite costly and thus unattainable, to help support individuals in poverty with poor mental health (Flèche and Layard, 2017).

To uncover whether finances impact mental health, Ljungqvist et al. (2015) conducted a study with 100 patients from a psychiatric facility. They split the participants into a control group and an intervention group. The latter group received an additional 500 Swedish crowns (~ £43) per month, whilst both groups received the same amount of care and assistance. It was found that the control group reported no change in wellbeing, whereas the group with the higher income demonstrated a significant increase in wellbeing through a decrease in levels of anxiety and depression. This could be linked to an enabled socialisation of the participants, as the participants noted that they used their money to go for coffee with friends and attending other social events. This could be evidence for demonstrating that money itself might not support individuals with mental illness but might enable them to partake in activities which are beneficial to their mental health. This research aims to expand on these findings by identifying the elements of service provision which are most successful in mediating manifestations of inequality (see Objective 2 in Section 1.5), including poverty and mental illness.

#### 2.7.4 Substance use

The third type of additional inequalities faced by individuals which this research would like to highlight is that of substance use. Apart from the obvious impact on the

health and wellbeing of the individuals who are dependent on substances arguably one of the most significant social issues with substance use and poverty is the discrimination faced by the individuals by the general public. Since the introduction of the welfare reforms (see Section 1.3.2), there has been an increase in discourse of the effects of these austerity measures in the media, which has also increased a focus on severe poverty and homelessness. As introduced in Section 2.7.2, individuals who are chronically homeless are frequently dependent on substances. This dependency can arise out of fear and isolation caused by stigmatisation by the wider population. Since the rise of a media focus on the austerity measures, rough sleepers who are dependent on drugs have been portrayed as ‘zombies’, leading to an increase in discriminatory attitudes towards these individuals and, subsequently, a rise in violent crimes against them. This leads to a perpetual cycle of stigma increasing isolation, having a detrimental impact on already very vulnerable individuals (Alexandrescu, 2019). This finding and the remainder of the previous three sections demonstrate that the inequalities faced by individuals are incredibly complex and multifaceted. They are upheld through discriminatory attitudes of society and ingrained into institutions. Section 2.11.3 will discuss this discrimination in more detail. The following section will discuss the arguably most widespread symptom of inequality, i.e. the lack of financial resources, more commonly referred to as ‘poverty’.

## 2.8 Poverty

### 2.8.1 Definition of poverty

Having looked at how inequalities have developed within society, the question arises of whether it is possible to create a shift towards a more equal society. When addressing unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities, it is particularly important to focus on those who have fewer economic and social privileges. In modern policy, the condition affecting those on the less affluent end of the wealth distribution spectrum is referred to as “poverty”. Though inequality may be the greater issue to be tackled, policies often focus on tackling poverty<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, it is important to understand what the term itself entails. The word poverty denotes a lack of financial and material resources (Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, 2015). The exact definition

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<sup>12</sup> The semantic differences between using the terms ‘inequality’ or ‘poverty’ will be discussed further in section 2.9

varies greatly and remains one of the most debated definitions in social policy. There are two main approaches to understanding poverty: the structural-functionalist approach and the conflict-theory approach. Structural functionalist theories view society as a multifaceted system, consisting of synchronised, cooperating structures. Social phenomena, including inequality and social stratification, are seen to be necessary components to a functioning system (Calhoun et al., 2007). Following this logic, inequality ensures that the most functionally important jobs are filled by the best qualified people and vice versa, which, unfortunately, is not necessarily the case (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). On the other hand, the conflict-theory approach to poverty represents the view that poverty and economic inequality are detrimental to the general population, whilst benefitting only a select few (i.e. the wealthy). This thesis will likewise argue that a society in which a significant portion of the population live in what is considered to be below the poverty line and have fewer opportunities to an economically successful life, is not a fair or equal society.

Social mobility may be profoundly restricted if one does not have access to all resources which are necessary for escaping impoverished circumstances. Social resources, such as education and social capital, can play a large role in one's ability to advance economically (Putnam, 1999). Strong social capital does not solely assist in gaining access to various resources, but it has many positive quantifiable effects, such as lower crime rates, better educational achievements and higher economic productivity. Generally, high social capital can be associated with positive social development<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, physical resources or assets, such as a car or a home, can be beneficial towards cost reduction in times of need (Barry, 2005). In accordance with this idea, recent research has investigated material deprivation as an indicator of poverty. This aims to be more comprehensive in measuring poverty, as it accounts for the ability to acquire material items deemed necessary to an acceptable standard of living and wellbeing. Through this, it overcomes some of the issues with using income as the sole indicator of poverty. The following section will look at how these indicators were developed into measurable quantitative indices.

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<sup>13</sup> Social capital refers to established social networks (e.g. friends, family, cooperatives, neighbourhoods). Research has found strong social capital to be correlated with lower crime rates, higher income levels, and generally positive social development (Putnam, 1999). Section 2.11 will focus on this in greater detail.

### 2.8.2 Indices of poverty and deprivation

Policymakers set income or asset thresholds to identify a quantitative boundary between those who are considered to live in poverty and those who are not. A poverty line is particularly helpful in determining and measuring international economic development. By definition of the United Nations, for instance, extreme poverty is characterised by an income of less than \$1 per day (UNESCO, 2016). Though international poverty lines are useful for measuring development, the guidelines are based upon the countries with the lowest GDP (Feldstein, 1999). Consequently, international poverty lines are tailored towards developing countries, thus not being as relevant in developed countries. The previous section has introduced the idea that income is not alone sufficient to determine an individual's ability to fully partake in social and economic activities. Therefore, researchers have experimented with various additional factors in an attempt to find an accurate measure of measuring deprivation.

The term 'poverty line' was coined by Charles Booth in his statistical evaluations of London neighbourhoods in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Booth (1887) carried out an evaluation of the residents of Tower Hamlets, a neighbourhood in East London, and identified eight social classes. Two of his classifications included "poor" and "very poor" (p.328). His classifications were categorised by quantitative thresholds, taking life circumstances which extenuate these conditions into consideration.

By the word "poor" I mean to describe those who have a fairly regular though bare income, such as 18s to 21s per week for a moderate family, and by "very poor" those who fall below this standard, whether from chronic irregularity of work, sickness, or a large number of young children. I do not here introduce any moral question: whatever the case, those whose means prove to be barely sufficient, or quite insufficient, for decent independent life, are counted as "poor" or "very poor" respectively; and as it is not always possible to ascertain the exact income, the classification is also based on the general appearance of the home (Booth, 1887, p.328).

Despite conducting a study of a quantitative<sup>14</sup> nature, Booth demonstrates an understanding of the indefinability of poverty as a static object. Poverty signifies the inability of individuals to have an acceptable standard of living based on the resources

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<sup>14</sup> Quantitative refers to research based on objective data, such as numerical or statistical data. The definition of the term will be discussed in Section 4.2.

available to them, regardless of any other factors. Booth (1887) draws the significant conclusions which recognises the role of social and economic factors in the poverty experienced by individuals. This concept will resonate throughout this thesis.

The ideas of Booth (1887) were built upon by Peter Townsend (1987) who developed an index of poverty and deprivation as a response to problematic indices at the time. Some of the issues of previous indices included stereotyping and using outdated indicators (e.g. automatically assuming that being a single parent signifies living in poverty). An index was developed to provide a statistical overview of material deprivation in an area. The four factors included to analyse levels of material deprivation are unemployment, non-car ownership, non-home ownership, and household overcrowding. Townsend advocated the index as a replacement for using income levels. Hereby he pioneered the idea of investigating the complex array of quantifiable factors which inhibit the potential to an acceptable standard of living. As an alternative to Townsend's deprivation index, Carstairs and Morris (1991) developed the Carstairs Index. This index was developed as an alternative for Scotland to replace the use of households with postcode level Census Output Areas (OAs)<sup>15</sup> as denominators. Its aim is solely to analyse material deprivation. The indicators used are overcrowded households, lack of car ownership, low occupational social class, and male unemployment. Building upon this, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2016) was developed as a tool for local authorities to form development strategies where they are most needed. It aims to be an all-encompassing tool towards measuring different levels of deprivation, using 38 indicators from seven domains (e.g. health, education, housing) to determine geographic concentrations of deprivation levels. Whilst these indices are beneficial to determining target populations for policy applications, they have certain limitations. When setting a quantitative threshold for poverty, it is possible to exclude and overlook the needs of individuals who do not fall into these categories yet consider themselves to be struggling financially and socially.

Modern poverty indices have introduced qualitative factors in the measurement of individuals' prosperity, or lack thereof. These aim to incorporate individual's

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<sup>15</sup> Census Output Areas refer to clusters of adjacent unit postcodes, which have similar population sizes and aim to group areas according to tenure type and type of accommodation (Scottish Government, 2016c)

judgement over their circumstances to provide a holistic measure of poverty and deprivation. For instance, the “capability approach”, advocated by Amartya Sen (1999), denotes that poverty should not merely be defined by a lack of income or possessions, but also by the intrinsically sparse opportunities towards factors such as education, employment, good health, long life expectancy and, particularly, wellbeing. Amartya Sen (1999) conducted an international study on how tackling inequality is a matter of providing basic human rights. He describes resources in themselves to be irrelevant, whilst the value of an individual’s freedom to have an acceptable standard of living is immeasurable. When an individual can afford a basic subsistence, but cannot afford to acquire items necessary by custom, it can largely impact the ability to participate in common activities which are essential to acquire said resources. Subsequently, this lack of engagement could then result in a further loss of resources. This inaccessibility of freedom intrinsically links to a lack of power over one’s choices. Deepa Narayan (2000) characterised poverty as powerlessness and voicelessness. The lives of individuals living in poverty are driven through state provisions. Because of this dependency, a disparity in power becomes evident between individuals in poverty and institutions. As the individuals have no control over the provisions available to them or the interactions they have with the institutions they rely on, feelings of powerlessness and voicelessness arise, which drive social exclusion and severely impact wellbeing. This exclusion is further driven by discriminatory attitudes held by members of civil society against individuals in poverty (see Section 2.11.3). Narayan’s (2000) framework of poverty being rooted not only in material deprivation, but in a lack of wider social relations and control over one’s life choices will resound strongly throughout this thesis.

Whilst the research of Sen (1999) and Narayan (2000) focussed mainly on developing countries, their conceptualisation of poverty as a lack of freedom and power is very much applicable to the UK. Section 2.7 argued that individuals from impoverished backgrounds do not have the same freedom as wealthier individuals to gain secure housing, employment or education (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Sen (1999) demonstrates that it is vital to view anti-poverty efforts comprehensively. This approach is reflected through this research. This research sought to identify a holistic overview of the influences that services and wider resources have on levels of



inequality. The following section will look at how poverty is a comprehensive element of inequality.

## 2.9 'Poverty' or 'inequality'?

Controversy exists over the use of the term 'poverty' in favour of 'economic inequality'. Whilst the debate is partially a matter of semantics, the use of either terms can have profound implications for how the issue is tackled. The term 'poverty' implies a solitary phenomenon of impoverished environments, whilst 'inequality' refers to faults of the entire economic structure. As Peter Marcuse (2014) states:

If inequality rather than poverty is the focus, we are required to focus on both the rich and poor. The conservative argument that inequality per se doesn't cause poverty is correct. But the conclusion that limiting the wealth of the rich won't help the poor is incorrect. "Inequality" raises the question of the relationship between rich and poor, exactly the question that the War on Poverty and the opportunity approach conceals (no pgn).

With this statement, Marcuse precisely encapsulates the dilemma of using the term 'poverty'. He describes how the use of the term 'poverty' masks the skewed relationship between the upper and the lower classes. He interprets what is often seen as causes of poverty, as intentional means of creating a divide. It ignores exploitation of workers in everyday life. Marcuse refers to four main areas where exploitation is present. It is present at the workplace, where employers can keep wages low to obtain a higher profit. It is present in property, in which tenants pay large sums of money to the landowner, without accumulating assets of their own. Marcuse shows the conundrum of favouring the word 'poverty' over the word 'inequality'; however, his view is not shared by all theorists.

An advocate of favouring the term 'poverty reduction' over the 'reduction of inequality' is Martin Feldstein (1999). His leading argument is that poverty is a social ill, whilst inequality is an inevitable, even desirable by-product of society. He bases his argument on the Pareto principle, which states that "change is good if it makes someone better off without making anyone else worse off" (p.34). Acknowledging that inequality has indeed increased in the second half of the twentieth century, Feldstein summarises his perceived justification of this phenomenon. He states that

those with well-paying jobs have usually spent a long period of their lives in education and are thus deserving of their higher wages. Whilst this statement is partially true, Feldstein assumes equal opportunities towards high education; whilst in reality individuals from a working-class background have a much lower chance of high educational attainment (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). He also assumes longer working hours for those who are wealthy, using the example of overworked bank employees to justify his case (Feldstein, 1999). Yet again, this statement overlooks inherited wealth, which is a great example of access to large sums of money without having to work at all. This is a phenomenon which reinforces inequalities, as inheritance most frequently benefits those who are already comparably very wealthy (Kohli, 1999; Appleyard and Rowlingson, 2010). It also ignores the differences in pay scales across different sectors or even within sectors for arguably equally intellectual or strenuous types of employment. This research has taken the backgrounds of service users into consideration to identify whether the participants were able to access education and how it affected their financial stability.

Poverty is a symptom of economic inequality. In order to fully “cure” a society from the disease of poverty, the economy would require a total restructuring of the social order. Whilst this is by no means impossible, the concept does not provide sustainable relief to those who most need it. However, it is important to target not merely the unequal distribution of resources, but also ensure that individuals have an acceptable standard of living. Despite the controversy surrounding the semantics around using “inequality” or “poverty”, the fact that a large percentage of the population cannot survive on their income is unacceptable. Whether an individual works long hours in a low-wage job, is unable to work, or cannot find work, it is a human right to be able to afford a basic subsistence (i.e. food, clothing and shelter). However, the semantics of the two terms are indeed a vital aspect to understanding how policy is implemented to target poverty. Policies referring to tackling inequality will likely aim towards redistributive measures and a restructuring of the economic status quo. Policies aiming to tackle poverty are likely to employ alleviation tactics through public and Third sector services to help minimise the impact of living in impoverished circumstances (see Chapter 3). Tackling the status quo helps to address the real problem of poverty creation, which is why a focus on inequality is better. Policies which leave the status quo intact by focussing solely on poverty address the symptoms without tackling the

real problem: the societal structures that create poverty in the first place. Therefore, it must be questioned how strategies such as those set out by the Dundee Fairness Commission (2012; 2016) can truly impact poverty. By focussing solely on those in poverty, it will never be eradicated. This leads onto the next section, which will discuss causes of poverty.

## 2.10 Causes of poverty

As it is of vital importance to understand an issue before a solution can be proposed, the investigation of the causes of poverty is a key factor to developing anti-poverty strategies. The theoretical construction of the causes of poverty is driven by ideology. John McKendrick (2014) has summarised four main factors that are commonly attributed to the cause of poverty:

- **INDIVIDUAL FACTORS:** i.e. lack of individual incentive to actively engage in activities which would alleviate poverty,
- **SOCIAL FACTORS:** i.e. socialised, routinized behaviour that maintains poverty levels,
- **POLITICAL FACTORS:** e.g. levels of taxation and welfare that affect levels of income,
- **ECONOMIC FACTORS:** e.g. availability of employment, minimum wage.

These four classifications can be categorised into factors which have a direct effect on poverty (individual and social factors) and those which set the wider context for poverty (political and economic factors). Focussing on the individual as the root cause of poverty is the main constituent of “classical” and “neoclassical” theories of poverty. Empirically speaking, as McKendrick (2014) suitably points out, individual factors are rarely the cause of living in impoverished circumstances. Attributing poverty to social factors should be approached with care, as it could insinuate that individuals are themselves to blame for their circumstances. For instance, the concept of “cycles of poverty” is used in popular media (Shildrick et al., 2012, p.1). The term is frequently misused to justify a myth created by the British mainstream media of transgenerational worklessness. A large-scale study conducted by Scottish researchers in deprived neighbourhoods in Glasgow and Middlesbrough has failed to discover the concept in

practice. Even two generations of unemployment were found to be extremely rare (less than 1% of all participants). Long-term detachment from the labour market was not found to be a value passed on from one generation to another. On the contrary, in families with parents who were long-term unemployed, both the children and the parents were keen to avoid the impoverished circumstances associated with unemployment as it was recognised that most unemployed individuals struggled to find work due to external circumstances (Shildrick et al., 2012). However, a lack of social mobility (i.e. the ability of individuals to escape poverty) is still very much present within the UK (Brown, 2013; Payne, 2017; see Section 2.12) and was exhibited by participants of this research. This could potentially be caused by the existence of in-work poverty, as individuals in employment could be falsely viewed as having escaped impoverished living conditions (Payne, 2017). Another complex social issue that intertwines with poverty is social capital. The next section will focus on how these two social phenomena are interlinked.

## 2.11 Social capital, social inequalities and levels of trust

### 2.11.1 How social capital relates to inequality

Social capital is a concept that relates to relationships built between individuals, both on an individual level and within organisational social structures (Coleman, 1988). It is generally characterised by the ability of individuals to capitalise on the benefits of these relationships. Social capital “can only be generated collectively thanks to the presence of communities, or particular networks, but individuals and groups can exploit it at the same time” (Ferragina, 2010, p.75). This encapsulates the essence of social capital theory, which inhibits an individualistic, neoliberal ideology of the benefits of social capital to the advancement of individual interest. Despite reciprocity and collective identity being advocated as essential elements of creating wider social networks, these are described as being mechanisms humans use to advance their own interests on a long-term basis (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). Raising social capital has become of interest to policymakers dealing with poverty-related issues as it is increasingly recognised as having wide-ranging positive effects, such as a higher rate of educational achievement, economic production, and wellbeing (Putnam, 1995, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). The first objective of this research seeks to identify representations of inequality and social exclusion (see Section 1.5), which includes an

analysis of the social networks available to the participants. The following section will discuss previous theory on social capital and economic inequality.

Two of the leading theories on social capital have been developed by Robert Putnam (1995) and Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Both theorists view social capital as a form of currency and a way of expressing one's social status in society. Putnam (1995) researched social capital out of concern that social capital was deteriorating in the USA, which he attributed to a decrease in engagement in social clubs and voluntary action. He stated that a lack of engagement in these activities was deteriorating the trust individuals had towards other members of society, which in turn reduced the individuals' willingness to engage in exchanges of reciprocity and engage in collective action. The activities are the basis of a strong economy, according to Putnam (1995), hereby conveying an idiosyncratic ideology holding individuals' lack of civic engagement responsible for a deteriorating economy. Whilst Bourdieu (1986) also drew parallels between the economy and social capital, he focused more on the creation of inequality through social capital. Bourdieu (1986) viewed social capital as a means of access to resources, so access to a collective would widen access to resources held by other members of the network, hereby determining one's social standing with society. Social capital is the result of relationships that are established and nourished throughout a lifetime, and the capital that arises as such is the product of the amount of power inhibited by the individuals with whom we share a relationship. Bourdieu (1986) also differentiates between social capital, which is the collective expression for who we know and what resources we can access through whom we know, and cultural capital<sup>16</sup>. Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital as behavioural and cultural traits we embody, such as dress sense, accents, educational achievements, or the way we behave in certain situations. Individuals who share cultural capital are likely to share a collective identity, which is strengthened through shared values and outlooks. Joining a group with a collective identity increases the amount of capital available to the individuals, ultimately increasing the availability of resources available to them. Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualisation of cultural capital follows a Marxist conceptualisation of capital being an accumulation of labour, over

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<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital as described in this section as "habitus". To maintain clarity throughout this thesis and to highlight the relation to social capital, it will be referred to as cultural capital.

which the elite have an unfair advantage. His theory states that wealthier individuals exhibit higher social capital by creating exclusive networks from which less wealthier individuals are excluded, automatically excluding them from the resources available to the members of the network. Traits such as higher levels of education and speaking with a certain accent associated with the elite classes would provide the individuals with a symbolic capital which automatically gives them more power within society. Bourdieu (1986) offers some valuable insights to understanding how symbolic traits drive elitism and, thus, inequality within society. This inequality is heightened for the ‘elite’ as individuals with more power and resources build networks with other individuals with the same benefits, ultimately increasing the collective amount of power and resources available to the actors within the network. These theories convey the concept that social capital is similar to economic capital. Those who are at the lower end of the spectrum lack social and financial resources or, at least, have less socially valued forms of relations. This research would like to question these concepts.

Putnam (1995) and Bourdieu (1986) form theoretical frameworks on how social networks are built and what relevance this has to social standing. Both theorists reference the benefits of a collective identity and having solidarity with one another, yet they approach the question from a rather individualistic perspective. Whilst Bourdieu (1986) recognises class relations as drivers for differences in social networks, he describes human relationships as a “product of investment strategies individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long-term” (p.23). This is a very egocentric outlook on human relationships. Theories, such as Kropotkin’s (1902), demonstrate that humans have a natural desire to be altruistic and being part of a collective is human nature. Therefore, arguably, human relationships mean more than solely their potential benefit to individual interests. Both social capital theories also insinuate that individuals with a lack of financial resources and power subsequently also have either a lack of social networks or less valuable networks than individuals with higher levels of wealth, which is something this research has questioned. The following section will discuss theories of social capital for this group of individuals.

Before discussing how poverty links to social capital, this section will introduce classifications of social capital. Social capital has been categorised into three types:

bonding, bridging and linking (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004, Coleman, 1988).<sup>17</sup> They are listed here in descending order of familiarity, meaning that bonding social capital refers to close relationships between friends and family, or members of a social network who share characteristics and values. Bridging social capital refers to relationships that cross demographic groups, are generally maintained through everyday interactions and built on mutual respect (e.g. with neighbours or co-workers) (Coleman, 1988). Linking social capital is a more specified classification of bridging capital and refers to the wider social network of an individual to individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Whilst these categorisations as such have been developed after some of the papers discussed in this section, this research will categorise the types of social capital as determined by Szreter and Woolcock (2004). Bridging and linking social capital, which are facilitated through environments such as workplaces and institutions, have been linked to becoming resilient to poverty, as individuals are able to share a wider amount of resources amongst each other, facilitating a share of economic capital. This includes gaining access to employment and housing opportunities (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Individuals from working class backgrounds have previously been found to be lacking in bridging and linking social capital (Hall, 1999). Bonding capital, on the other hand, is a valuable factor in maintaining levels of health, wellbeing and perceived security as it provides individuals with a sense of safety and belonging (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004), which is supported through the findings of this study. The value of connections to individuals with similar experience is proven to be invaluable to creating inclusivity and increasing levels of wellbeing. Despite the particular significance of bonding capital, all types of social capital have relevance towards leading a socially inclusive life and should thus be considered as an important factor towards creating an inclusive community. This research looks at how social networks were created by individuals considered to be in poverty and how they could be framed within wider theories of inequality. The following section will discuss how individuals in poverty relate to and trust wider social structures.

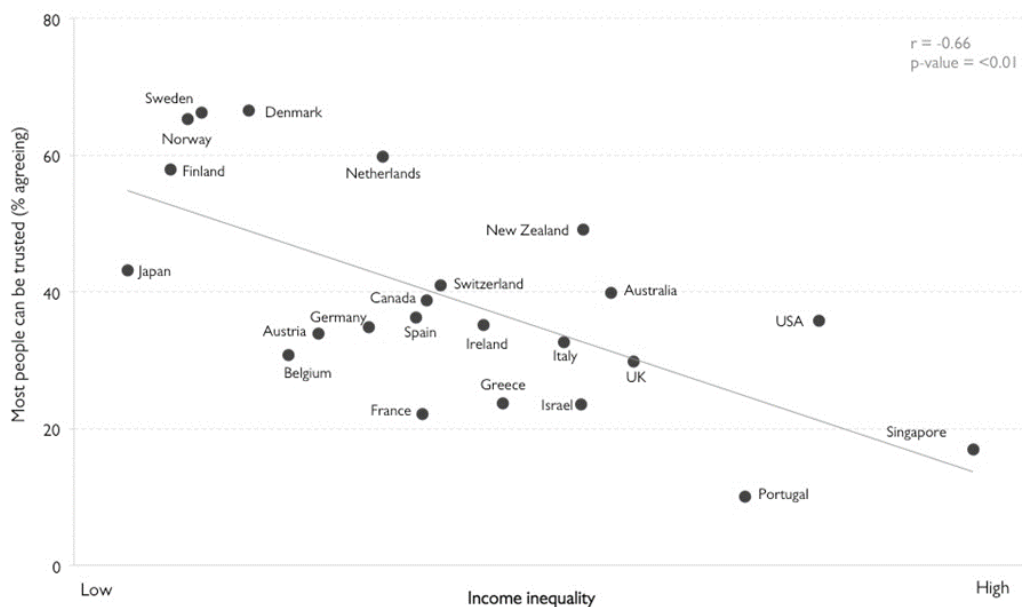
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<sup>17</sup> Coleman (1988) first categorised the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital, whilst Woolcock and Narayan (2000) further differentiated between bridging and linking social capital.

### 2.11.2 Social and institutional trust

Whilst social capital is recognised as having a positive correlation with wellbeing and a negative correlation with poverty, it is a difficult concept to introduce within a city. How can a government stimulate interaction and increase meaningful bonds between its citizens? Agger and Jensen (2015) researched the capability of local initiatives to increase social capital within communities. The researchers found that initiatives were only able to successfully increase bridging and linking capital if high levels of bonding capital were already present. This is because bonding social capital created a feeling of individuals belonging to a supportive network. This feeling of security was a prerequisite for individuals being able to place trust in new individuals to build wider social networks, i.e. increasing bridging and linking capital (Coleman, 1988) and is also a vital component towards economic growth (Algan and Cahuc, 2010). Trust in other citizens is also correlated with trust in institutions (Agger and Jensen, 2015). This means that a lack of trust can have a great impact on the ability of the institutions to intervene within a community (Powell, Thurston and Bloyce, 2017).

#### Levels of trust are higher in more equal rich countries



**Figure 2.4** The relationship between trust and inequality

Source: Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009



As seen in Figure 2.4, levels of trust are negatively correlated with levels of inequality. Levels of trust have previously been found to be lower within neighbourhoods with high economic deprivation (Gould and Hijzen, 2016; Mocetti, 2016), in which anti-poverty interventions are much more likely. Following these findings, implementing these initiatives would be a very difficult task. If individuals who face economic hardships are less likely to trust in other citizens and institutions, this raises the question of how policies targeting these individuals can be effective. Income inequality negatively impacts social trust, particularly in individuals on the bottom end of the inequality spectrum. But as social trust is essential for economic growth (Algan and Cahuc, 2010), it is vital that this social trust is rebuilt again. Putnam (1999) stated that civil engagement in the form of volunteering or participating in social groups is correlated with higher levels of both social and institutional trust; therefore, facilitating engagement with the community could potentially have wide-reaching positive effects. As social trust has commonly been found to be correlated with institutional trust, trying to increase trusting and supportive social networks could have a large impact towards social cohesion. However, the key issue remains that inequality negatively affects social trust, so applying measures to counter the symptoms of a greater issue may be effective to increasing individual wellbeing (Mikucka, Sarracino, and Dubrow, 2017), but their long-term sustainability would have to be researched further. Links between inequality, social capital and trust, particularly towards institutions, are complex and personal processes which warrant an alternate theoretical exploration and are examined throughout this research.

Multiple studies have been conducted on international levels and have found that countries with higher income inequality display lower levels of trust, particularly for individuals on the lower end of the spectrum (Gould and Hijzen, 2016). Barone and Mocetti (2016) investigated this issue further and looked at how trust relates to intergenerational social mobility<sup>18</sup>. After finding that trust was impacted further in developed countries which were not only very unequal, but also displayed low levels of intergenerational social mobility, the researchers concluded the following:

First, inequality generates social barriers across groups, thus hampering social ties and the formation of trust, and this effect is clearly even stronger in more immobile

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<sup>18</sup> Intergenerational social mobility refers to the ability of individuals to “travel” through different social classes over the generations. This concept will be discussed further in Section 2.12.

countries. Second, the perception of unfairness is likely more rooted in societies in which inequality is transmitted across generations, thus negatively affecting trust. Third, inequality may generate resource conflicts that, in turn, deteriorate trust. This sentiment is again more widespread in more immobile societies, where the reproduction of social classes may reinforce class consciousness and resource conflicts (Barone and Mocetti, 2016, p.808).

This quote insinuates that a lack of trust of individuals from deprived backgrounds is attributable to an antagonism towards other social groups as a result of unfair treatment in society. This study will look at levels of trust exhibited by the participants who consider themselves to be in poverty and see whether this relates to their economic circumstances. Research on social exclusion claims that individuals in poverty are disconnected from wider communities and institutions. This will be discussed in the following section.

#### 2.11.3 Does poverty lead to social exclusion?

Social exclusion theory, whilst not interchangeable with social capital, shares conceptual similarities with theory on social capital and poverty. The term ‘social exclusion’ conceptually encapsulates a lack of social capital experienced by individuals in poverty. The term is used in policy and social work as it reflects a discourse of inequality and structural oppression, rather than individual causes to refer the lack of social capital individuals may have. Pierson (2002) states that social exclusion signifies a lack of resources to participate in society.

Through this process people are cut off for a significant period in their lives from institutions and services, social networks and developmental opportunities that the great majority of a society may have (Pierson, 2002, p.7).

In essence, social exclusion is merely a representation of the wider inequalities faced by individuals in poverty. This definition is used as a guideline to develop social work practices which aim to incorporate this understanding into practice. Pierson (2002) suggests partnership working between a wide range of agencies as a way of offering a broader range of access points to individuals who are excluded from institutions. Whilst Pierson’s (2002) writings offer insights into how to introduce individuals in poverty to a greater range of agencies, the following paragraphs will look at one of the

main social contributors to the exclusion of certain individuals from wider social institutions: stigma.

A contributor to the social exclusion of individuals who experience poverty is the concept of stigma. Stigma refers to discriminatory attitudes that individuals or institutions have towards individuals. This was briefly referenced in Section 2.6 with the elaboration of Danny Dorling's (2014) conceptualisation of elitism within modern Britain, which can be seen as the root cause of many of these types of stigma. The effects of stigma can be wide-reaching. Individuals can be stigmatised precisely for their lack of financial resources as others may fail to recognise the wider social influences that create economic inequality, instead holding the individuals responsible for their circumstances. This can lead to individuals feeling shame for their circumstances (Lister, 2015), essentially internalising the stigma others have towards them. Stigma is intersectional, meaning that individuals can be subjected to further discrimination for identity characteristics, such as gender and sexuality (Atrey, 2018), and experiences such as mental illness (Perese, 2007), disabilities (Whittle et al., 2017) or substance use issues (Room, 2005). The larger issue at hand is not only the psychological effects of being discriminated against, but also that stigma can act as a structural barrier to the individuals receiving appropriate care and sustenance. Individuals with these issues are sometimes not believed about the severity of their issues, which can impact the ability to access necessary welfare and social support, as individuals could be thought to be exaggerating symptoms for monetary gain (Whittle et al., 2017). It can also hinder the integration into wider society, including accessing employment, safe housing and integration into the community (Perese, 2007). Stigma, conversely, can also limit access to support organisations. For instance, individuals with substance use issues who also live in poverty are less likely to receive adequate support compared to wealthier individuals (Room, 2005). These findings underline the fact that social exclusion is not a lone standing phenomenon, but rather a structurally and culturally enforced consequence of negative attitudes towards individuals living in poverty.

Carlin (2019), who conducted a study in Edinburgh on the challenges of employment in the modern labour market, rejected that individuals who were between jobs were socially excluded as such. The study found that individuals were actively engaged within the labour market through short-term contractual work and continuously

engaging with employers through job applications. Carlin (2019) also reports that the individuals did not feel like outcasts, although their social networks are not explicitly elaborated. However, they faced a hindrance in wider society as their engagement with the labour market was disadvantaged from the onset. This raises the question of whether individuals considered to be in poverty are indeed socially excluded or, perhaps, do not fit into previous definitions of social capital and social exclusion. This is investigated through the second research question, which looks at how individuals in poverty create coping strategies and how/whether social networks are a part of this. Whilst much of social exclusion theory focuses on the exclusion of individuals from wider society, some research has found that immediate social networks, or bonding social capital, can also be affected by economic inequality.

Much research has been conducted on the impact of economic inequality on levels of trust to the wider population. A study by Black, Scott and Shucksmith (2019) has found that family relations can also significantly suffer under economic crises. The study identified both the economic crisis of 2008 and austerity measures as drivers which strained family relations. Families were affected by fewer secure job opportunities, a higher conditionality of welfare (see Section 1.3.2), taking over carer responsibilities when support services were cut, and other impacts which resulted in a loss of income. Young adults which were reliant on financial support by their families then either suffered a loss of this income or increased family tensions, which potentially escalated in a financial crisis. Without bonding or bridging capital to assist the individuals into the wider job market, the individuals were vulnerable to a loss of financial resources, self-confidence and a social network. These findings demonstrate that economic hardships have a complex effect on wellbeing and relationships, which would ultimately affect social and institutional trust.

In conclusion from the previous three sections, previous research shows that whilst inequality does not necessarily affect bonding capital, poverty has been shown to be correlated both with a lack of bridging and linking capital (Hall, 1999; Szeter and Woolcock, 2004) and a lack of trust (Gould and Hijzen, 2016). However, in extreme cases, the stresses of poverty can result in a loss of bonding capital (Black, Scott and Shucksmith, 2019), though the long-term effects of this are not elaborated. Despite this, there is inconclusive evidence on how or whether social capital can be built and whether trust can be established. The first objective of this study seeks to understand

experiences of individuals considered to live in poverty. This research also seeks to identify the complexities of social inequalities and how services affect the experiences of these inequalities (see Section 1.5). Researching these will help to give an understanding of how individuals in poverty build networks of support. The following section will look at the barriers presented to individuals in escaping the effects of inequality.

## 2.12 Geographies of poverty and social mobility

The term social mobility refers to the capacity to “travel” through different social classes, generally measured by comparing the individuals to previous generations (Payne, 2017). This concept is used commonly by policymakers to seemingly provide an opportunity for individuals in poverty to escape their life circumstances (Brown, 2013). However, social mobility is still very limited in the UK, to the point where some researchers have referred to a “social stagnation” (Brown, 2014, p.693). Even when individuals pursue higher education in hopes of attaining a larger income, other social barriers, such as a lack of resources to fund studying, or a lack of social connections to find a job, create large inequalities in life chances. The largest factor which plays a role in determining future economic prospects is the socioeconomic position of an individual’s family during their childhood and adolescence (Brown, 2013). It is indeed possible for individuals to achieve upward mobility. However, this is firstly a rare occurrence, and secondly, the meritocratic system through which they gain their achievements moulds the individuals into outsiders from their working-class backgrounds (which links back to Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital discussed in Section 2.11.1). This dissonance experienced by the individuals can result in the creation of a “third class” of citizens, which experience social inequalities as a result of not belonging, despite having overcome the effects of income inequality (Jin and Ball, 2019). This demonstrates that even when social mobility is encouraged, it does not completely reverse the effects of inequality as experienced by the individuals.

As generational effects can impact an individual’s socioeconomic position, so can the geographic location of one’s upbringing. Geography can be applied to understanding how inequality is reinforced through spatiality, as spatial inequalities are still present within the UK (Milbourne, 2010). Spatial inequalities can be visible, for instance in

the shape of inner-city ghettos<sup>19</sup>, but in modern European cities the concentration of deprived neighbourhoods have been pushed to the peripheries of cities (Wacquant, 2008a; Milbourn, 2010). There is a strong correlation between locality and individual economic outcomes. This demonstrates that a great inequality exists in terms of the geography of an individual's upbringing and their ability to have financial stability in adulthood. The following quote encapsulates how deep-rooted this inequality is, and that the inequality persists due to the prevalence of stigma.

Families in Easterhouse and the Aylesbury Estate<sup>20</sup> are not responsible for housing policy, nor do they decide macro-economic policy, wage levels or education systems or structures. Residents do not make decisions about the levels of support offered via what is supposed to be a system of social security, nor do they have much influence over the levels of funding available to local public services. People living in poor neighbourhoods do not even have much say over how they are talked about or treated by such services and other organisations and institutions. They generally do not generate their own stigmatisation. The 'taint of place' that is often attached to working-class neighbourhoods comes from the representation of those areas in media and political discourses. (Crossley, 2017: chapter 4, no pgn)

This research looks at the representations of inequality in Dundee City to understand from where the need for poverty alleviation arises. Part of that is to examine the individuals' backgrounds and find commonalities for potential early intervention strategies. There have been past attempts to counter geographical inequality. In a study conducted on an urban resettlement scheme, which aimed to relocate individuals considered to be from a deprived background into an area with high access to institutions, it was found that these individuals did not build connections with individuals outside of their own socioeconomic position (Curley, 2010). This raises the question of what wider social barriers prevent the individuals from becoming a part of this wider society.

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<sup>19</sup> Ghettos are not present as such in Western Europe, however inner-city poverty is still very much prevalent (Wacquant, 2008a). For instance, in Dundee, poverty is seen both within the city and on the outskirts (see Section 1.3.3).

<sup>20</sup> These are areas in Glasgow and in London with high levels of poverty and deprivation.

### 2.13 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that inequalities are deeply embedded within society. Social hierarchies have been documented in some of the earliest societies known to mankind (Flannery and Marcus, 2012). Capitalism drove the discrepancies in income and social status between the working classes and the upper classes. The concept of hereditary wealth and privilege further increases this divide (Marx, 1847; Marx and Engels, 1848). Inequalities have been steadily increasing since the 1970s, even in the most developed countries of the world (Pitketty, 2014), and despite the social and economic causes responsible for keeping individuals in poverty (McKendrick, 2014), elitism is entrenched into modern discourse, holding individuals who experience poverty responsible for their fates (Dorling, 2014). This stigmatisation of the individuals can even provide barriers to receiving appropriate support from institutions (Whittle et al., 2017; Perese, 2007). There are many different embodiments of inequalities, such as disproportionate access to healthcare, education, and employment (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Carlin, 2019). Overall, these inequalities can be framed as a lack of power, freedom to make choices and barriers to participating in society (Sen, 1999; Narayan, 2000).

As discussed above, there is inconclusive evidence to paint a complete picture of inequality. Inequality is also a fluid concept, which adapts to the dynamics of social change. This research seeks to identify representations of inequality within a wider context. The first research question, as set out in Section 1.5, seeks to identify experiences that lead individuals into poverty and the barriers which keep individuals in poverty. This question will be explored through interviews with individuals who consider themselves to be in poverty and will highlight the wider inequalities faced by individuals. Chapter 4 will provide more evidence on how this research answered this question.

One of the biggest research gaps this research aims to tackle was the inconclusive evidence of the role that services play in reducing social inequalities (see Objective 4 in Section 1.5). As discussed in Section 2.11, this would include an analysis of how services affect social aspects such as social capital and stigma. Previous theories have established that a lack of economic capital is inherently linked to a lack of social capital (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). This research questions the assumption that

individuals in poverty do not have social networks and seeks to identify how individuals in poverty establish networks of support, whether through service provision or otherwise. The following chapter will discuss the literature on poverty alleviation.



### 3 Poverty alleviation

#### 3.1 Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter focussed on how inequalities are manifested within society, this chapter will discuss how society has attempted to reduce the symptoms of living in poverty. This chapter will focus on poverty alleviation rather than the eradication of poverty. This thesis will argue that whilst reducing overall inequality and eradicating extreme poverty is a desirable goal, this lies beyond the capabilities of social services. As discussed in the previous chapter, the elimination of inequality and the interconnected existence of poverty would require a complete restructuring of the economic structure, which is out of reach to the organisations studied in this research. The organisations accessed by the participants of this research and studied in the wider network analysis contribute to the alleviation of poverty and related factors rather than its elimination. The second objective of this study seeks to evaluate how services aim to support their service users and what effect this has on the manifestations of inequality as experienced by the service users (see Section 1.5). This chapter will introduce the value of certain elements of poverty alleviation, such as encouraging social inclusion and co-production, towards improving life circumstances of service users. This chapter will discuss previous literature on how policy and service provision can mitigate poverty and social exclusion.

The chapter will first discuss the relevance of poverty alleviation to give a background to why society has a moral obligation to assist those who live in poverty (Section 3.2). It will then look at welfare, a modern approach taken by governments to provide financial assistance to individuals who are unable to work (Section 3.3). As poverty is prevalent in modern society, our social structure may be responsible for its prevalence. The chapter will then look at how society has attempted to create higher levels of equality through fundamental social changes (Section 3.4). Finally, the chapter will discuss the role of social services in mediating poverty. This will be the largest part of the chapter, as it will discuss the types of services that are utilised to combat poverty and deprivation, and factors which have been successful or unsuccessful (Section 3.5). This leads on to the discussion of partnership working strategies, in particular asking why have services taken the approach of working together and what implications does this have for service provision and the communities which they target (Section 3.6).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed insight into the role of partnerships in poverty alleviation. It will conclude with an overview and discussion of the most relevant points provided in the chapter (Section 3.7).

### 3.2 The relevance of poverty alleviation

Since the first discussions of wealth distribution, even classic social theorists have become concerned with the issue of poverty alleviation. Tackling inequality and poverty are a moral commitment with the practical benefits of eliminating the economic and social problems that correlate with these issues. Particularly after the French Revolution sought to rid society of inequality and hierarchies, theorists of the eighteenth century focussed on understanding how inequality seemed to increase, predominantly within cities, as discussed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5. Through comprehending the processes behind this, it could be possible to reduce or eventually eliminate poverty and the many social ills that correlate with it. To some, Marxist theory proposed desirable solutions, however to the general public these solutions would seem utopian and thus not actionable. They would require a radical upheaval of the standing social structure, thus making them unlikely to be realised in the near future, yet alone in the 1800s.

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, deprived living conditions can take a great toll on the lives of those affected. How is this issue addressed by governing bodies and institutions? The way in which poverty is tackled is dependent on the respective construction of the term poverty and is led by philosophical and ethical agendas. Whilst this research follows the argument that a just society is one in which all have equal opportunities to economic success, wellbeing, and fair resources, following Sen's (1999) narrative of the capability approach (see Section 2.8.2), structural functionalism has shown that this belief is not universal (Calhoun et al., 2007; see Section 2.8.1). Some people believe that inequality is a necessary attribute of a functioning economy. In order to implement a governmental strategy or policy, it is necessary to justify its benefit to society. One argument is that a life in poverty is not only detrimental towards those experiencing it; poverty is also detrimental to society as a whole. The UK Government spends £78 million per annum on costs associated with assisting those living in impoverished circumstances (e.g. healthcare, social services, and educational programmes) (Barnard et al., 2016). For this reason, it is not

only a moral obligation to tackle poverty, but also a logical solution towards reducing government spending and encouraging an efficient economy.

### 3.3 The “Welfare State”

One major strategy employed by governments to provide support to those with little or no access to income is welfare. Welfare refers to a monetary support system provided by the state through tax income as a means to supporting people with their basic needs. The United Kingdom is particularly renowned for its extensive welfare system. Commonly, the term welfare is used to refer to income support for those with low-paying jobs or for those who are unemployed. However, welfare also refers to state pensions, childcare support, compensation for individuals with disabilities or long-term illnesses, and other support structures for individuals who have little to no income for various reasons. Whilst these provisions are part of the welfare system, the term “welfare state” refers to a much broader array of social programmes. In essence, the term encapsulates any socialised (i.e. taxpayer-funded) programmes provided by the state for the benefit of the citizens. For instance, free education and healthcare, which are available in Scotland to every citizen, can be considered to be part of the welfare state (Cousins, 2005). Nevertheless, in its very early stages, the welfare state emerged as a means of social support for the struggling workforce. In the United Kingdom, welfare is mainly regulated by the national Government at Westminster (IPPRN, 2014), whereas between the years of 2013 and 2018, some welfare power has been continuously devolved to the Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2020). The distribution of the national budget, which has a profoundly consequential influence, affects public service provision and welfare distribution. Both play vital roles in alleviating levels of poverty (IPPRN, 2014). Controlling the budget on welfare and public services can conflict with effective means to lowering poverty. Documents published by the UK Government on changes to the welfare system utilise phrases such as “supporting families”, “realising the potential of the education system” and “tackling entrenched worklessness” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2016), applying discourse which conveys a sense of introducing measures to advance and benefit society. The following paragraphs will discuss the actual effects of austerity measures in welfare.

As the welfare state is an integral part of a modern society, abolishing support for those in impoverished circumstances could be viewed as an affront to modern civilisation. In 1996, former President of the United States and Democrat Bill Clinton introduced welfare reforms in America, which were introduced under the pretence of assimilating the welfare laws to the “new economy and incentivising individuals from ‘welfare to workfare’” (Wacquant, 2009, pp.76-78). Particularly women, children and ethnic minorities suffered as a result of the reforms<sup>21</sup>. The reforms caused great global controversy, even amongst members of Clinton’s government, as they felt he betrayed the values of the left-wing party of the Democrats. Loïc Wacquant provides a critical review of these reforms in the following statement:

[The] “welfare reform” was not bold: far from introducing novelty, it merely recycled remedies issued straight out of the country’s colonial era even as these had amply demonstrated their ineffectiveness in the past: namely, drawing on a sharp demarcation between the “worthy” and the “unworthy” poor so as to force the latter into the inferior sections of the job market (irrespective of the availability and parameters of employment), and “correcting” the supposedly deviant and devious behaviours believed to cause persistent poverty in the first place (Wacquant, 2009, p.79).

This quote is remarkably applicable to the Welfare Reform Act of 2012, implemented by the Conservative government in the UK under Prime Minister David Cameron. Through amplified requirements and commitments to receive welfare, such as the increase in commitments to accessing Universal Credit as discussed in Section 1.3.2, a strict division is created between who is deserving or undeserving of the benefit, through stringent conditions to accessing the benefits and new commitments to adhere by to access the support (Kennedy and Keen, 2016). Historically, schemes that aim to drive individuals into employment result in individuals who are pushed into low-paid, sometimes even unregulated employment, increasing the levels of in-work poverty and insecurity (Payne, 2010). This demonstrates that welfare reforms can have a

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<sup>21</sup> The reforms were criticised for providing sexist, racist, and otherwise questionable regulations. The reforms required recipients to engage in employment after receiving welfare for two years, which was a barrier towards single women, who in many cases had sole custody of their children. The policy also introduced a two-children cap and discouraged individuals for having children out-of-wedlock. These and multiple other changes did not account for the multiple vulnerabilities faced by women and ethnic minorities, which meant that these groups were more negatively affected than white males (Banerjee, 2002; Limbert and Bullock, 2005).

negative influence on poverty levels in the country, whilst stating they aim for the contrary. Welfare should be advocated as a universal right of citizenship, rather than on a selective basis. T. H. Marshall (1949) developed a theory of social citizenship, in which he established that states have a responsibility towards ensuring that its citizens can live a life appropriate to the standards of the society they live in. Providing welfare would ensure that individuals have an acceptable standard of living. Taking a universal approach to welfare appreciates the role that wider factors play in the creation of inequality, whereas the conditional approach, as exhibited by the UK Government under the current welfare structure, holds the individuals responsible (Morazes and Pintak, 2007). As demonstrated in Section 2.10, social and economic causes are the main factors driving the creation of inequality (McKendrick, 2014). The following sections will look at social changes that have been demonstrated to combat inequalities, rather than reinforce them.

### 3.4 Undertaking social and economic change to reduce inequalities

This section will look at theories of how society can become resilient towards economic pitfalls as a whole. When recognising the role of socioeconomic and political structures in influencing levels of poverty, poverty alleviation can be seen as a necessary moral obligation towards a better society (Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, 2015). One of the key issues mentioned in the previous chapters is that of the increasingly and uneven distribution of wealth on both a large (i.e. globally, nationally) (see Section 2.5) and a small scale (i.e. within organisations). On a smaller scale, lower pay ratios between the lowest and highest paid workers within organisations have been advocated and successfully implemented to increase within-organisational equality. This process is called executive pay equity. It has the benefit of allowing workers their fair share of income, whilst also being beneficial to the business through increasing work morale, and thus, productivity (Bowers and Whittlesey, 2010). This is one of many examples of how employers can help reduce inequality levels.

In addition to pay ratios, further in-work equality strategies have been introduced in the nation. The rise of poverty created through low wages has called for the introduction of “Living Wage” campaigns by local authorities throughout the country.

For instance, the Islington Fairness Commission (2011) and the Dundee Partnership (2012) introduced the measure to combat local inequality, as outlined in Section 1.3.4. The leading argument of the campaign states that minimum wage is insufficient to cover living costs. In an analysis of how the Living Wage could impact household inequality, Morelli and Seaman (2016) drew upon data from national labour and household surveys. Overall, the Living Wage campaign was found to have high cost effectiveness (i.e. cost to outcome ratio) in the public sector<sup>22</sup> and predicted to have a positive effect on particularly female workers, working single mothers, and young workers. As the Living Wage campaign is still in its early stages, it will be important to view its effect on those who have been subjected to the transition. As Morelli and Seaman (2016) suggest, it will be vital to understand the effects on individuals who simultaneously receive welfare payments. Executive pay equity and the Living Wage campaign are examples of how employers can assist in increasing equality. However, financial equality requires more than just a fair income. Whilst pay equity is a significant factor in alleviating financial issues, it assumes that poverty is solely defined by individuals falling beneath a certain level of income. Chapter 2 demonstrated that inequalities associated with economic inequality are much more extensive than that. The following paragraphs will look at additional solutions which have been advocated to eradicate poverty.

Arguably one of the biggest economic change ‘experiments’ in the UK was the sale of social housing through the Right-to-Buy scheme. The Right-to-Buy scheme was implemented in 1980 by Margaret Thatcher. It allowed tenants of social housing to buy the property at a price below market value as to incentivise house ownership (van Ham et al., 2012). Whilst in theory, asset ownership is beneficial in securing financial stability, the reality of this scheme is that many individuals took on mortgages they could not afford or bought properties that needed significant amounts of repair, in either case leading to an accumulation of unaffordable costs and debt (Blandy and Hunter, 2012). The idea of building resilience through asset ownership is advocated strongly by Michael Sherraden (1991) who suggested that welfare structures encourage long-term financial stability by supporting individuals to build assets, such as savings incentives, supporting homeownership and preparing for retirement. These provisions could provide financial safety nets to individuals in times of financial

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<sup>22</sup> Local government and authorities are currently the main advocates of the Living Wage campaign

crises. A review by Searle and Köppe (2014) highlights challenges of implementing asset-based welfare structures. It questioned the validity of data on assets, which was focused mainly on middle class Americans, who will likely have a different approach to the importance of assets than individuals who are living in poverty. Concerns were raised that individuals who barely had enough money to survive were unlikely to have additional finances to put aside. Nevertheless, the paper concluded that asset-based welfare in combination with income security could provide the best possible outcome for immediate and long-term financial security. These findings highlight that there are many potential solutions to poverty, but there is still a large gap in the research of identifying effective long-term solutions to reducing poverty.

Marxist school of thought believes that the replacement of capitalism with socialism is the solution to socioeconomic equality (see Section 2.4). However, it is not to say that capitalism and socialism are thoroughly incompatible. For instance, in Norway or Finland democratic socialist governments fully comply with a capitalist economy. Poverty levels are exemplary to the international community. Policymakers of the Scottish Government (2008) have referred to Scandinavian social structures in anti-poverty policy papers as exemplary. However, geographic theories of poverty remind us that though this concept may be functional for one country, it is not necessarily applicable to other locations which do not share similar infrastructure and culture (Peet, 1975). Nevertheless, Norway still acts as a reminder that a revision of the economic structure in Britain could perhaps be a simple solution to lowering the high levels of poverty in the country.

Whilst the previous paragraphs have focused on financial solutions to poverty, some initiatives have focussed on implementing schemes to target a lack of social capital and social exclusion. As discussed in Section 2.11, social capital has been previously found to be negatively affected by poverty (Hall, 1999; Woolcock, 2002). In response to this, some countries have implemented schemes that advocate mixing residents from different socioeconomic statuses within neighbourhoods. As the article surmises, there are many both theoretical and empirically evidenced issues with this strategy. It concludes that social capital cannot be forcefully implemented, as individuals are not likely to engage with others on a meaningful level unless they have the desire to do so (Wacquant, 2008a). The question remains whether individuals in poverty can establish these wider social networks, which is explored within this research. The following

sections will look at how social services have been utilised to minimise social and economic inclusion.

### 3.5 Mediating impact of poverty through social services

#### 3.5.1 Introduction to services

The main issue in combating poverty is not necessarily the lack of understanding of its origins, but rather the lack of adequate or effective solutions. In the United Kingdom, the Third Sector plays a large role in mediating the effects caused by poverty. A large number of volunteers work alongside paid employees to support individuals in need. Austerity measures in the UK are shifting service provision from the public sector to Third Sector and charitable organisations. Whilst the national government controls the distribution of funds, practical poverty alleviation occurs on a smaller scale. Neoliberal politics have resulted in a diffusion of responsibilities, meaning that duties formerly carried out by the state have been transferred to smaller, local organisations. This has also been the case in poverty alleviation, meaning that voluntary organisations lose their voice as a representation of the community by adhering to regulations as set by their contractors (Murray, 2013).

The three main types of organisations associated with poverty reduction in modern Britain are local authorities, public services, and a relatively young branch of services, the Third Sector. The Third Sector refers to voluntary organisations, social enterprises<sup>23</sup>, and charities. In Scotland, the Third Sector has achieved internationally renowned political status and influence. Despite a recent increase in funding towards Third Sector organisations, a scarcity of data, or rather a multitude of divergent impact measurements of these services prevents a comprehensive overview of effective anti-poverty measures. The organisations are funded through alternative income sources, such as crowdfunding, independent funding bodies, or grants. Funding bodies currently have the greatest influence over service provision as they are the main source of income for many types of social services. Austerity measures have additionally restricted the subsidy towards supporting Third Sector organisations. As is the case with public services, funding bodies are subsidised through taxpayers. However, Third

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<sup>23</sup> Social enterprises are organisations using commercial strategies to achieve a social or environmental goal (e.g. employing homeless or ex-offenders). The profit intake is re-invested towards the desired cause.



Sector services are much less regulated in their service provision and are free to experiment with innovative service techniques, whereas public services have a bureaucratic barrier towards straying from the standard methods. On the other hand, Third Sector services have to justify their methods to funding bodies in order to receive the necessary finances to conduct their operations. This has led to the presentation of biased data in an attempt to receive funding for a desired project. Public services, which used to have a relatively steady flow of monetary resources available to them, are now similarly subjected to funding cuts (Harlock, 2013). In an economy in which unemployment is rife and opportunities are scarce, escaping impoverished circumstances can be a difficult task. Nevertheless, mediation tactics are employed as a beneficial means to increasing chances towards a better future.

Much of the previously listed research on poverty-reducing strategies looks at legislative reformation rather than the provision of services. Chris Goulden (2016), head of impact at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, released a report on poverty reduction. The only services that are listed as being beneficial to reducing poverty are family and relationship support, as this is said to strengthen social cohesion. The report suggests measures, such as raising income levels, improving educational skills, and supporting individuals into employment, as a solution for reducing poverty. The evidence to support the effectiveness of services in comparison to economic measures such as raising wages or increasing welfare is not necessarily scarce, but there is a lack of conclusive evidence. In a complex world of intertwining factors, it can be extremely difficult to identify a single force behind the fluctuations in local rates of poverty and deprivation, such as those demonstrated in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2012; 2016). Services, arguably, find their strongest footing in qualitative data.

### 3.5.2 Types of services: how services support individuals in need

“Social services” is a very broad term. It encompasses a whole range of support services for marginalised or disadvantaged groups. Historically, the first social services were documented in the UK in 1601, when the “poor law” provided stigmatising, but initial steps towards protecting older people and individuals with disabilities. Initially this type of support was regulated by the local parish and regulations were vague, meaning that support was often minimal. The responsibility of care services shifted towards local councils in 1929, with a great increase in the

types of services following the second World War. This was due to the war causing a surge in individuals with mental illness or disabilities, individuals in poverty, and elderly without family support. The government introduced funding towards community-run, localised services, similar to how services are provided in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the 1960s. The National Assistance Act of 1948 (amended in 1962) required councils to have long-term commitments to health and welfare goals and provide services to support individuals in need. The initial issues with a lack of coordination were solved in 1970, which required local councils to have a department to manage social services. Implementing this new type of management was carried out successfully but was shaken up in the 80s and 90s<sup>24</sup>. This has led to the collaboration of public, Third and private sector in social care provision as we know it today (Thane, 2009). Collaboration between organisations, or ‘partnership working’ as it is referred to by the Dundee Fairness Commission (2016) and within this thesis, is a key focus of the research at hand. It is precisely this collaboration which this research has found to be beneficial in addressing multiple complex needs<sup>25</sup> and providing opportunities towards a wide range of access points. The types of support provided by organisations varies greatly. The three major types of social services which were accessed by the participants of this study were categorised as follows: advice services (e.g. financial advice for debt or welfare), financial or resource provision (e.g. funded housing, food parcels), and community or peer support groups. The following paragraphs will discuss the application of these types of services in modern Britain.

Housing is a major factor to investigate when tackling poverty. A study carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation researched what they called the “housing crisis” and how English cities have been tackling this crisis through strategy and planning. There were multiple issues to be considered. Social housing was becoming less available to those who needed it, whilst the poorly regulated private renting sector was steadily growing and becoming more expensive. Housing conditions were worsening with one fifth of homes in England being deemed as uninhabitable in 2014 by government standards. Two overarching propositions were made by the researchers to future

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<sup>24</sup> Compulsory Competitive Tendering was a programme developed by the UK Conservative Government in the 1980s which sought to advance the neoliberal agenda of minimising local authority responsibility and outsourcing via privatisation (Pinch and Patterson, 2000)

<sup>25</sup> The term ‘complex needs’ will be elaborated in detail in Section 3.5.3. It refers to individuals requiring support for multiple issues (e.g. homelessness, substance use, welfare advice) and does therefore not fit into single target profiles of mainstream support services (Balda, 2016).

policymakers: increasing housing availability and providing housing subsidies or assisting with housing costs (Crisp, Eadson and While, 2016). The writers also suggested looking at a property value tax. In 2013, the Scottish Government had pledged to provide 30,000 affordable homes to Scottish people, and to remove the right-to-buy scheme (introduced in Section 3.4) to reduce the loss of social housing (Scottish Government, 2013). Providing both affordable and adequate housing would provide individuals with not only material and financial gains, but also with personal wellbeing, which is essential to individuals thriving socially and economically (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2011).

One study, which utilised evidence from 55 studies, concluded that welfare advice services have significant financial benefits for those who utilise them. The average financial gain of individuals who had accessed advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau was £1026 per year (or £85.50 per month). There was little evidence on the social benefits of the intervention, however the researchers attributed this to a lack of good quality evidence (Adams et al., 2006). Another review of 87 papers searched specifically for the impact of advice services on health and wellbeing, but likewise struggled to find conclusive evidence (Allmark et al., 2013). In this study, financial advice services were found to be imperative to emergency financial relief. Whilst no conclusive evidence on wellbeing was discovered in relation to financial advice services, the services provided vital safety nets to prevent the individuals' financial situation from deteriorating any further.

Individuals who have specialised needs, such as individuals battling with addiction or reintegrating into society after incarceration, often require a specialised support worker to support with these specific needs. Bryant (2018) conducted a study in Australia with young individuals who were accessing support services for addiction. The study found that these services offered opportunity for individuals to build formal social capital through gaining access to housing and employment opportunities through their support workers. This study similarly found that services provide a basis for individuals to build social capital and create communities of peers. However, it warned that these networks were dangerous to recovering addicts, as drugs were readily available within them. This resulted in some service users relapsing and subsequently disengaging from the services they attended. Individuals with substance use issues are also highly likely to have experienced trauma, with 75% of individuals

seeking support for substance dependency reporting having experienced trauma (NHS Scotland, 2017, p.9). In recent years, policy has introduced the term “trauma-informed” to guide service provision across all sectors. For instance, NHS Scotland (2017) introduced a framework for acknowledging the impact of trauma in childhood and adulthood as it can contribute to inequalities and disadvantages, particularly affecting “poorer wellbeing outcomes including poor physical and mental health and reduced educational and social attainment” (p.4). This indicates that individuals who are sometimes already disadvantaged in childhood can face further disadvantages through the effects of trauma later in life. The framework set out by the NHS Scotland (2017) provides guidelines such as recognising the effect of this trauma on substance use and mental illness, for instance, rather than trying to ‘fix’ the person (which follows a similar philosophy of not holding individuals responsible for the poverty they experienced, as set out in Section 2.10). The framework also suggests implementing practice which promotes empowerment, individual choice and agency, and trust (p.34). These concepts are written to provide psychologically informed guidelines to dealing with individuals who have experienced traumatic life events; however, these elements could provide useful guidelines to tackling some of the issues related to inequality, as they could counter the lack of power they experience in wider society (Sen, 1999; Narayan, 2000). Overcoming this lack of freedom experienced through a lack of capabilities and power would require a reintroduction of individual agency and freedom to make choices, which can be a difficult task when even the concept of implementing top-down strategies contradicts the notion of increasing individual agency (Krause, 2013). The question remains of how to encourage this freedom of agency, which will be discussed throughout this thesis. The recognition of a complex array of life experiences as set out in the previously mentioned framework on trauma-informed service provision has been classified by policy as complex needs. The following section will focus on how services have characterised and aim to target these ‘complex needs’.

### 3.5.3 Recognising and targeting complex needs

One of the largest issues facing service providers is that many individuals do not require support solely for one “domain” (e.g. housing, welfare advice), but rather an array of interlinked services to tackle a range of interlinked issues (Balda, 2016). Recognising these complex needs as a factor in the extent of poverty in the UK is an

important step in developing adequate service structures. The designation “hard-to-reach” is commonly used to refer to individuals who are not engaged with services. However, the term can be viewed problematic, as it essentially shifts the blame from the inability of service providers to include certain population groups to those who do not trust the services enough to want to participate (Powell, Thurston and Bloyce, 2017). The term “complex needs” is more suitable here. It refers to individual circumstances which arise from living in poverty and those which directly cause poverty. This could include disability, crime, mental illness, homelessness, and more (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Balda, 2016). All are social problems which correlate with poverty and inequality yet require specific approaches to tackle them (Balda, 2016). This is a key factor in recognising that providing classic poverty reduction services are solely a cog in the wheel of a large network of collaborating social services. It is important that individuals are supported in their individual needs to become financially stable, but also to reach the mental, physical and social capacity to live a fair and sustainable life. Therefore, this research took a comprehensive approach towards understanding the impact of a wide range of service on inequality, as it was increasingly recognised throughout the course of the research that financial advice services only address an element of the individuals’ needs.

The issue of complex needs has been considered by Balda (2016) in his paper on homelessness in Edinburgh. Whilst the research sought out to evaluate the effectiveness of current service provision towards the homeless, it uncovered some issues surrounding the term “complex needs”. The study found that though the term “complex needs” is commonly used by service providers and policymakers, there is neither an academic definition of the term, nor a common consensus of the term amongst services who work with individuals who are considered to have complex needs. Balda (2016) found “complex needs” to be defined as:

- “anybody that doesn’t fit or could be excluded from mainstream services” by a public body official,
- “the ‘standard definition’ [because] we are to an extent bounded by the definitions of others because we are commissioned by the Local Authority”, a variable definition as stated by a voluntary worker,
- Individuals who are considered to have three or more interconnected issues which would need the application of multiple services (2016, p.30).

The latter explanation was seen to be the most common definition of “complex needs”, albeit being an unofficial definition. Workers in the field also stated that it is not solely the type of needs that define ‘complex needs’, but how the needs are met. An individual who is unable to access services, has communicative issues or difficulties building relationships and is thus unable to accept necessary support can also be categorised as having complex needs. Considering the controversy surrounding the term, a good summary of complex needs is provided in the discussion of Balda’s (2016) paper:

[W]hen we label someone as having complex needs, maybe what we are meaning is people we don’t understand, can’t explain and don’t know how to deal with (2016, p.33).

The paper also states that disengagement from services should not be seen as a symptom of ‘complex needs’ that needs to be fixed, but as perhaps the core issue to be fixed within an ineffective system. Instead of moulding individuals to fit into the current service system, the system needs to work holistically to be more inclusive and adaptive for its users. Balda (2016) links the disengagement of vulnerable individuals with services to a disengagement with society. This ties back to theory on social capital which links a lack of economic capital to a lack of social capital (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Hall 1999; see section 2.11). The focus of services should not be to find a way to engage individuals, but to build a society in which they naturally feel included. Balda (2016) stated that the difficulties of engaging certain populations not only affect service users, but also the frontline support workers who try to engage so called hard-to-reach, vulnerable individuals. They feel frustration on a personal level, as they struggle to come to terms with feeling like they cannot support someone, whilst it is their vocation to provide support. They feel underappreciated, as their work with these clients goes unnoticed by policymakers. As it stands, much of the Third Sector is governed by funding applications and providing hard, quantitative evidence of impact, such as percentages of service users who have recovered (Zimmer and Pahl, 2018). This means that individuals with complex needs may be excluded from service access, as their recovery would be a far more difficult journey than that of others. So essentially, the individuals who could arguably most require support may be denied it as they are less likely to contribute to immediate and quantifiable evidence of a strategy’s success. However, this disengagement is not an inexplicable occurrence.

Individuals who are considered ‘socially excluded’ are subjected to a significant power disparity between themselves and the institutions from which they seek support. Narayan’s (2000) conceptualisation of “powerlessness and voicelessness” in poverty is reflected in the relations individuals have with institutions, as they are subjected to decisions made by these institutions over which they lack agency. A true reformation of inequality would thus require a reinstatement of individual agency (Krause, 2013). The lack of agency experienced by individuals could explain the lack of institutional trust expressed by individuals in poverty in Section 2.11.2. There is a significant gap in research on how or whether these social linkages could be established through service provision. The following section will discuss factors which could affect how individuals engage with services.

### 3.5.4 Factors that affect service provision

#### 3.5.4.1 Improving services through coordination and continuity

As discussed above, individual services can fail to meet the needs of the individual; therefore, a collaboration of services which reflect the clients’ needs is a more appropriate solution (Kuosmanen and Starke, 2011). It is also important to listen to community needs and provide integrated, multi-level services. A study on vulnerable youth in Canada looked at how multi-level service coordination could impact the effectiveness of the service delivery. Though coordination could be beneficial towards achieving an end goal between organisations with shared values, structural barriers could prevent a true collaboration, such as organisations not wanting to share resources or, in essence, allow others to “claim” a client. The authors suggest coordinating services in places that are highly accessible towards the targeted individuals, ideally in locations which the individuals already attend. On top of this, it is suggested to offer combined services, to facilitate easier access. This idea seems highly plausible; however, the former idea could be difficult to fulfil when targeting individuals who may be severely isolated, i.e. rarely leave the house. Continuity is another factor which is desperately needed by individuals to secure long-term future security. This means continuity in the sense of seamless transitions, but also in the sense of long-term aftercare. Many services provide initial, short-term solutions to immediate problems. However, long-term contact can not only foster familiarity, but also stop the need for intervention services; by providing the service users with the care they need throughout, emergencies are prevented from happening in the first place (Ungar et al.,

2014). Taking these elements into consideration could be valuable in making services more effective in tackling inequality.

When city planning commissions introduce strategies to tackle inequality, the discourse used to set targets can determine the longevity of the anticipated outcomes. Adam and Green (2014, p.1515) differentiate between “soft outcomes” and “hard outcomes”. Welfare-to-work strategies which target “hard outcomes”, meaning quantitative measures such as increasing employment levels to a specific rate, tend to be much less sustainable than “soft outcomes” which aim to increase awareness of local issues and guide policy using individual experiences. Soft outcomes were found to have a profound effect on sustainable cultural change. The authors refer to the geographies of local partnership initiatives as “soft spaces”, as policy landscapes can be interpretable and flexible in their application (p.1514). The rise of in-work poverty discussed in Section 3.3 is a clear example of how “hard outcomes” can falsely determine success within a strategy. Therefore, the application of “soft outcomes” may be more suitable in determining the success of a strategy. Success of services is however not just determined through internal decision but is also affected by an array of external factors. The following section will look at one of the most significant external barriers to service provision and how it impacts service provision.

#### 3.5.4.2 Austerity measures and their effect on service provision

The second objective of this project seeks to identify barriers to service provision (see Section 1.5), which was examined through interviews with frontline staff and policymakers. One of the largest issues facing services is that of austerity. Funding cuts can severely debilitate the capacity of services to provide what they believe is necessary. The role of local government in handling local issues is a direct result of neoliberal diffusion of responsibilities, as instilled by the UK government. Despite the pragmatism of this idea, local organisations are expected to resolve problems arising from national matters, i.e. drivers they have no control over (Geddes, 2011). Local authorities have struggled to compensate for the effect of the welfare reforms, which have resulted in an immense cut in income available to those who are most vulnerable. As public services have been subjected to austerity measures, local authorities have been searching for alternative measures to tackle rising inequalities (Hill, 2015). An example is the introduction of “fairness commissions”. These strategies attempt to



tackle locally specific socioeconomic challenges using collaborative action between local authorities, third sector organisations, and the public (Lyll, 2015).

Iafrati (2016), for instance, suggests that austerity measures should facilitate cooperation. Using the example of foodbanks struggling to keep up with large demands caused by the shift to Universal Credit, Iafrati (2016) states that foodbanks should collaborate with other organisations to prepare for and share the demand, whilst also recommending that those referring individuals to a foodbank should be more mindful of the voluntary, non-statutory nature of foodbanks. Iafrati (2016) makes a valid point on the cooperation of organisations. Resource and knowledge-sharing has been shown to be beneficial to the survival of struggling organisations. This is the value which drives partnership working. The following section will look at how services have come together to actualise this cooperative approach.

### 3.6 Partnership working

#### 3.6.1 Partnership working in practice

Partnership working can be traced back to the emergence of a self-help movement initiated in the 1970s as a response to poverty. In the late 1980s and 90s, this idea developed into including individuals from impoverished neighbourhoods in development and decision-making processes, which led to what is now known as a “partnership” (Phillips, 2002). Partnership working can be defined through basic cooperation, in which organisations meet up and regularly discuss practice, or also through interorganisational referrals, mutual funding bids, and jointly carrying out work (Sheehy, 2017). This research will focus mainly on partnerships through referrals and basic cooperation, as set out in the 2014 action plan of the Dundee Partnership. As partnership working links multiple agencies with one another, individuals who are excluded from institutions (see Section 2.11) have the opportunity to reach a wider range of organisations (Pierson, 2002). This would benefit those with multiple complex needs (Kuosmanen and Starke, 2011), as identified in section 3.5.3. The rise of partnership working has been attributed to a process called governance. With the rise of neoliberalism, national governments are passing on the responsibility for the governance of local communities to the communities themselves. Whilst this allows for communities to engage in local initiatives through partnership working, for instance, state power over these governance spaces prevails (Taylor, 2007).

Governance theory has been linked to governmentality theory by Foucault. Foucault's (1978) theory of governmentality critiques the diffusion of governmental responsibilities to smaller local bodies in neoliberalism as it gives the illusion of agency over issues over which the smaller bodies have no control. Foucault's criticisms certainly arouse philosophical debate about the intentions of governments. Holding voluntary organisations responsible for the fate of their community and forcing them to adhere to strict bureaucratic measures has the consequence of suffocating the voice of the community, which is what these organisations were originally intended to be (Murray, 2013). Additionally, as previous sections have shown, national policies are responsible for things such as an increase in welfare conditionality, resulting in a rise in severe poverty, or austerity measures which cut the funding for essential services (see Section 3.5.4.2). Local organisations are then held responsible for dealing with the repercussions of these events, which can put a severe strain on already limited resources. In an attempt to make service provision more efficient and more effective, partnership working strategies aim to unite local communities and combine resources to tackle their common goal of making their community more socially and economically inclusive (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013).

In the UK, partnership working gained popularity through the New Labour government in 1997, which implemented a range of policies praising the benefits of partnership working. This was noted as being particularly relevant for partnerships between health and social care services to improve levels of care towards individuals with complex needs (Dickinson and Glasby, 2009). Dickinson and Glasby (1999) attributed the rise of partnership working initiatives to three main drivers: the rise of so-called New Public Management principles, the increasing awareness of complex interlinked social issues, and a social change of higher expectations towards public services to deliver. In the field of health and social care, partnerships are becoming an increasingly popular approach to care provision. Petch, Cook and Miller (2013) interviewed service users accessing services from multiple partnerships across England and Scotland to identify how the outcomes desired by service users were actualised by the organisations. Overall, it was found that within established partnerships, the service users felt that their needs were accommodated and that they felt they could achieve their desired outcomes. The four key service features found to be of importance to service users were:

- Co-locating, i.e. one central location in which service users could access all required services, which enabled simple access,
- Multidisciplinary teams, as the service users needed support with a wide range of issues that required engaging with specialists,
- Specialist partnerships, as the service users felt that workers which were well educated about their conditions were less likely to treat them in a discriminatory manner,
- And extended partnerships, meaning that service users reaped the benefits of access to a wider range of support services which could accommodate their needs (pp.628-631).

The latter point here resulted in a reduced and simplified referral process, as they were able to access a wider range of organisations through an individual worker, who passed on their information to appropriate agencies. An unregulated referral process can be a stressful process for service users, as it delays access to services and can result in individuals having to frequently recount traumatic experiences, eventually resulting in a disengagement from services and a decrease in overall wellbeing (Humphreys and Tucker, 2002; Hughes et al., 2019). Whilst Petch, Cook and Miller (2013) focussed on health and social care partnerships extending into the broader partnerships, this research is looking at financial and welfare advice partnerships, extending into the wider partnerships which include the Third Sector, health and social care services, and others.

With the increase of neoliberal values across sectors, social services are largely the responsibility of Third Sector organisations in Scotland. Lindsay, Osborne and Bond (2014) researched the evolving relationship between Third Sector organisations and their stakeholders, often local or devolved government, to understand the challenges posed by “New Public Governance”, a term used to describe the increasing inclusion of the Third Sector in decision-making processes and service delivery. The increasing collaboration of the Third Sector with public bodies boasted an increasing workload for the organisations which had contractual agreements with these bodies. Yet difficulties arose as this changed the way in which Third Sector organisations had traditionally delivered services. Organisations were changing their method of service delivery to become more streamlined to match requirements of funders. Smaller organisations in particular struggled with this, as they stood in competition with the

larger organisations who can produce a higher level of quantifiable impact. Sinclair et al. (2018) attributed this disparity in power relations to the reluctance of public authorities to concede power over mainstream service provision to smaller, innovative organisations. Despite some organisations receiving grants from local authorities, a “sponsor-client relationship” (p.1328) allowed public bodies to exercise control over the service delivery, subsequently suffocating innovative approaches to service delivery and moulding organisations to fit a status quo. To further these findings and to illuminate any power disparities between services, this research conducted a Social Network Analysis on the organisations who provide services in Dundee. Lindsay, Osborne and Bond (2014) concluded that the effect of this power disparity is that services which may have been beneficial to a smaller but more ‘socially excluded’ group were required to create more quantifiable results by focussing on those “closer to the labour market”. This raises the question of how and whether services can overcome this barrier to ensure that individuals who are at the extreme end of social exclusion can be included within the framework of service provision.

Co-production is a term utilised in policy to refer to collaborative efforts across “participant categories, for example professionals, service users, peer-workers and volunteers” (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018, p.828). Kirkegaard and Andersen (2018) conducted an ethnographic study on mental health services in Denmark to investigate the credibility of co-production in practice. This means they investigated whether the blurring of boundaries between workers, volunteers and service users was set into practice as a truly credible concept. The dichotomy of individuals being categorised as a “vulnerable” group outside of the more “privileged” group of workers and volunteers and simultaneously aiming to blur boundaries between these social groups poses a particularly complex social dialectic. It was concluded that co-production has the potential to create a sense of belonging and create effective service provision when social and symbolic boundaries were congruent with one another. Using an example of a volunteer discussing sensitive information on a service user with the staff, Kirkegaard and Andersen (2018) demonstrate that knowledge will almost inevitably create an imbalance in power relations between different social categories. Overcoming this disparity would require a rethinking of the approaches as used by service providers. Co-production efforts were most successful when the service users were provided with knowledge, authority and validation, not merely

presented with such on a symbolic basis. This means that service users are given actual responsibility, for instance through volunteering roles, which could contribute to their sense of being equal actors within the organisation, although it should be mentioned that many service providers were reluctant to concede their authority through these types of strategies. A study conducted in the East Midlands on volunteers and paid workers had found that though the relationship between paid and unpaid labour was not clear, all voluntary workers had spoken of higher confidence and gaining qualifications which could be advantageous in paid employment. Though the authors of this study did not emphasise this in their results or conclusion, most of the interviewed paid workers had also found their way into employment through a voluntary job. Other interviewees had moved from volunteer work to paid employment within the same organisations during the timeframe of the research. This shows that voluntary activity can have a positive effect on employment levels, meaning that the importance of these community organisations should be valued more (Baines and Hardill, 2008).

These previous few paragraphs have evidenced that partnership working can contribute greatly to a greater coordination in service provision and allow service users to access a wider range of services (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013). However, a disparity in power relations between more well-funded generally public and less well funded (generally Third Sector) organisations can lead to a streamlining of service provision that hinders creativity and potentially effective methods of service provision (Sinclair et al., 2018; Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014). This raises the question of whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of partnership working. This research identified how partnership working, with a particular focus on the referral process, affects those who seek out services. It also looked at how services interacted with each other through a network analysis, as to identify key players within the network and understand power dynamics. As mentioned above, services are most effective when power disparities are alleviated through the inclusion of service users in service provision to create a co-produced environment (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018). Some strategies have aimed to incorporate this line of thought into the idea of partnership working by incorporating services users and the wider community in the creation of policy, such as the fairness commissions which contextualise the background for this research (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011; Dundee

Partnership, 2012). The following section will discuss previous literature on this type of community inclusion.

### 3.6.2 The inclusion of the community in decision-making processes

Despite partnership working being advocated and implemented since the late 1990s, its involvement of the community has been shown to be lacking in practice. This is attributed to policymakers having the final say on relevant decisions, even when input from the community was officially accepted (Dickinson and Glasby, 2009). A key benefit of including members of the community is that these individuals are more likely to understand local problems (Taylor, 2007). The voluntary sector plays a large role in the delivery of public services and the involvement of the community. It has been proven to be of benefit not only to the community, but also to the wellbeing of individuals who partake in the voluntary activities (Milligan and Conradson, 2006, in: Baines and Hardill, 2008). The motivations for volunteering result from a mixture of altruistic and personal reasons. Altruistic reasons have been classified as either mutual aid, which refers to individuals with shared experiences supporting one another, and philanthropy, which refers to individuals supporting others with whom they perhaps cannot relate as closely (Baines and Hardill, 2008).

There is growing governmental interest in including communities in policymaking and local decisions, both within the UK and internationally. Within communities, external policymakers may be seen as having, and perhaps actually have, little insight to local issues. In contrast, community members are very knowledgeable about local issues and may choose to resolve these immediately and informally. The benefit of working with policymakers however comes through their resources (Eversole, 2011), which is ultimately their source of power, so therefore community members may choose to work with policymakers on issues that require a lot of time, resources and investment. This investment of time on bureaucratic issues can take away valuable time spent on conducting practical work (Taylor, 2007).

Marilyn Taylor (2007) conducted a study on the realisation of community initiatives within the frame of partnership working roughly a decade prior to this thesis. With reference to the New Labour framework, which implemented governance schemes in the late 1990s, Taylor's (2007) paper mainly discusses two empirical studies: one which investigated the role of communities and voluntary services within policy

processes and another which analysed Community Participation Programmes<sup>26</sup> (303). Taylor (2007) finds several issues present within partnership schemes. A significant finding, which relates back towards Foucault's critique of governmentality and neoliberalism (see Section 3.6.1), is that policies strongly focus on building "social capital". Whilst social capital has indeed been shown to be effective in decreasingly negative attributes of a community, focussing on it too strongly, or indeed stating that a lack of social capital is responsible for a neighbourhood's demise is described as "victim blaming". On top of this, it was emphasised that the community would never be valued as a true partner within a partnership with authorities due to the imbalance in resources: community members may offer insight but cannot contribute any financial or physical resources. Foucault's theory resonates in practice. Responsibility has trickled down so far, that not only local organisations are held responsible for the fates of their local community, but its residents are being called into community action. It could be argued that individuals are now being held accountable for the fate of their communities. Whilst welfare reform, public cuts and so on all have devastating impacts on economies, the public is expected to manage the consequences.

At the beginning of the new millennium, a few years following New Labour's introduction of partnership schemes, Colin Williams (2003) released a paper stating that introducing community organisations to deprived neighbourhoods is counterproductive, as the concept of community organisations is more attributable to prosperous populations. Instead of Third Sector community-based organisations, the paper suggests introducing a community support network. By this, the author means inspiring one-to-one support by members of the community, paid not through an income, but through a trade-in system through rewards that can be spent locally. Whilst this idea has great potential, as this research concludes that peer support can be highly advantageous in treating many social maladies, community organisations have a place within creating more social and economic inclusion. The following sections will look at a strategy utilised by local authorities to implement a higher level of inclusion of community groups.

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<sup>26</sup> A funding scheme by the UK government which aimed to support Third Sector organisations to contribute to public policy (Taylor, 2007)

### 3.6.3 Fairness commissions

Fairness commissions are the result of local governments trying to bridge the gap between authorities and communities by creating a partnership between them (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). The goal of fairness commissions is to have maximum impact using minimal resources. Therefore, individuals from all areas of the community are invited to take part in discussions on reducing inequalities. This method allows for an extensive knowledge exchange between officials, academics and the public in order to find suitable solutions for everyone (Lyall, 2015). In England, many local authorities modelled strategies after the Islington Fairness Commission, which was released in June 2011 (Bunyan and Diamond, 2014). It was initiated by Professor Richard Wilkinson, an advocate for equal societies. The notion of creating equal opportunities for everyone was reflected in the fairness commission to assist in lowering poverty and crime rates, increasing wellbeing, and encouraging other quantifiable developments (Lyall, 2015). Examples of recommendations made by the Islington Fairness Commission include:

- Raising local wages to the London Living wage,
- Lowering of pay ratios within organisations from lowest to highest paid workers to 1:10,
- Giving advice on handling debt and eradicating loan sharks,
- Increasing job opportunities by encouraging businesses to employ marginalised groups, such as individuals with a disability,
- Provide affordable healthcare,
- Offer reading and writing workshops to improve literacy skills.

The strategy aims to be inclusive of various social factors which play a role in social inclusion. It also states that members of the commission shall abide by the recommendations as to lead an example (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). Despite being at an early stage, it has been successful in achieving some of its goals. The Living Wage campaign has already had positive effects on lowering in-work poverty in Islington (Hull, 2014). The idea carried forward by this initiative has inspired dozens of other fairness strategies. A study by the Webb Memorial trust has



summarised several successful initiatives implemented by fairness commissions. The concepts are very similar to those of the Islington Fairness Commission but are tailored to the needs of each individual community (Bunyan and Diamond, 2014). The novelty of the concept of Fairness Commissions means that the evidence base for them are relatively scarce. There is little to no empirical evidence available on the effectiveness of the commissions. The following sections will entail the few studies that the researcher has located on the effect of fairness commissions.

Dabinett et al. (2016) released a paper on the fairness commission in Sheffield. Sheffield is a city with one of the lowest rates of deprivation in England, but it has a high rate of inequality. The paper itself is a synopsis of reflections of academics and practitioners on the Sheffield Fairness Commission. However, it does not contain any empirical evidence. The conclusion of the paper states that whilst it was not possible to establish which effects the commission has had to reduce inequality, a consensus existed that it has potential to achieve change. The involvement of Sheffield City Council and the use of its resources resulted in a large audience being reached, thus creating wide-reaching impact. Whilst some commissioners were initially critical of the potential of the commissions to instigate true change for those in need, initial debates were able to convince them otherwise. The commissioners agreed that the term “fairness” itself should not be up for debate, but the evidence of local inequality should speak for itself. A downfall with this paper is its self-admitted lack of empirical evidence. Another issue with this paper is the lack of reflection by those targeted by the policies. These two issues can affect the validity of the findings.

One of the most significant studies on fairness commissions to date was conducted by Sarah Lyall (2016), who carried out a study on 16 different fairness commissions. The research consisted of roundtable discussions with people who were long-term involved with the commissions and their progress. Lyall’s research concluded that fairness commissions have the potential to stimulate positive social change and fight social injustices, particularly in the areas of employment, housing and utility bills. The four approaches that were most successful in their application were:

- supporting social justice campaigns, such as the Living Wage campaign or a campaign against loan sharks,

- ending social injustices caused by rogue landlords and employers by increasing regulations,
- supporting collective action, such as bulk-buying schemes or cooperatives, and
- supporting and encouraging improvement of local support services.

She also found that campaigns that were less successful included Living Wage campaigns that focussed solely on leading by example, rather than providing incentives to local employers. These findings demonstrate that the most successful campaigns were those that integrated the knowledge and social power of the community whilst also utilising the reach and legislative power of local authorities in productive ways. However, Lyall (2015) concluded that whilst these campaigns have produced positive outcomes for the community, local authorities are limited in their legislative power, meaning that issues such as a national Living Wage or limits on private rent must be regulated on a national level. Whilst these papers give insight into the actions of Fairness Commissions, there is little evidence to support how the initiatives affect service provision and subsequently also those who access the services. As set out in Objective 3, this research aims to illuminate the effects of inclusive partnership strategies on service provision and, ultimately, the effect this has on the service users who access their support (see Section 1.5).

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that tackling inequality is as complex of an issue as its mere existence. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, inequality is deep-rooted within wider social and economic constructs, demonstrating that tackling inequality is an issue far beyond the capabilities of local services. There are many suggestions how to tackle individual elements of inequality, such as the provision of welfare to target income inequality (see Section 3.3), asset accumulation to provide financial safety nets (Sherraden, 1991; see Section 3.4), or the inclusion of service users in service provision through co-production to increase individual agency (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018; see Section 3.6.1). These contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion, which are symptoms of wider social and economic inequality. Services generally tend to target only one element of these representations of inequality, which can result in fragmented service provision. Partnership working aims to bridge the gap of fragmented service

provision by opening the doors to a greater range of support services for those who are excluded from society and social institutions (Pierson, 2002). However, the concept of partnership working is flawed. Local authorities are more powerful players within the network as they have a constant income stream and have power over the distribution of funding contracts, stifling service provision by smaller organisations and moulding them to align with their values (Sinclair et al., 2018; Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014). The literature on partnership working and the inclusion of the community provides little evidence on the impact this has on poverty and social exclusion as experienced by service users. Particularly the implementation of the Fairness Commission approach (as outlined in Section 1.3.4) is lacking in evidence (see Section 3.6.3). Therefore, this research investigates poverty alleviation through using comprehensive, holistic strategies as a means of temporarily supporting those in need. It attempts to establish an understanding of what strategies are most effective in supporting individuals to overcome the effects of inequality and poverty. Whilst evidence exists on the efficacy of individual strategies, there is limited evidence of how co-production can be effective in reducing poverty and the effects that partnership working initiatives have on inequality. The following chapter (Chapter 4) will discuss the methodology used in this research to answer this question, amongst others.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the research paradigm utilised in this study, as well as the methodology following from this. It will aim to provide a detailed overview of why and how data was extrapolated to meet the aims of the study. The first section will identify the methodological framework applied in this study (Section 4.2). This includes an outline of why it is relevant to understand the methodological framework applied in this research and the preceding framework of this study. The following sections will entail the details of the research process. The section on research design will elaborate the precise methods which were applied throughout this study (Section 4.3). It will discuss the reasoning for adopting interviews with three different participant groups and conducting a Social Network Analysis. This section is followed by detailed descriptions of the participants in this research (Section 4.4), the considerations that were taken to ensure ethical conduct (Section 4.5), the data analysis process (Section 4.6), and, finally, the limitations of this study (Section 4.7).

### 4.2 Methodological framework

The aim of this research was to provide a holistic, comprehensive overview of the effect that partnership working has had on levels of inequality in Dundee. In order to understand the impact of services, it was necessary to understand the performance of the support structure as a whole to identify strengths and weaknesses created by internal and external forces. This includes understanding the processes that encourage individuals to access services, the relationships between service providers and service users, the impact that services have had on the lives of the individuals, how support workers carry out their work in the framework of their organisation, and the policies that influence service provision. As a means of compiling a comprehensive overview of the service structure in Dundee and its relation to local rates of inequality, a systems approach was chosen to be the most suitable method for this study. Systems approaches offer the methodological framework which takes the complex, evolving nature of a support structure into consideration. The following section will detail the thought processes which were taken to come to this conclusion of applying this methodology.

Insights to a methodological framework are a preliminary step in fully comprehending the application of a precise data collection process. A ‘research paradigm’, which refers to a philosophical and theoretical framework, lays the basis for data collection. In the social sciences, a research paradigm encapsulates the ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods, and axiology of the respective research (Gray, 2013). These concepts, which are derived from philosophy, help to build a comprehensive overview of researcher’s understanding of reality, knowledge, and how they as a researcher relate to the world they are studying. These terms will be clarified in detail throughout this chapter.

The researcher’s understanding of reality and nature of being (i.e. *what does it mean to be?*) is referred to as a research ontology. Understanding how someone perceives their state of being is an important element in understanding why certain research tactics are employed. Two key strands of research ontologies are positivism and anti-positivism (or rather, interpretivism).<sup>27</sup> Positivist research seeks to uncover an objective, universal reality. Positivists believe that truth is absolute and is an approach which is typically employed by researchers in the life sciences, although quantitative social research may sometimes fall under this category.<sup>28</sup> An interpretivist perspective, on the other hand, advocates the idea that reality is relative. This perspective was advanced by early social researchers, who opposed the idea of applying positivist methods to researching society. To interpretivists, truth is context-dependent and socially constructed, meaning that it is shaped by experiences and social interaction. Therefore, truth is not seen as being absolute, but as a variable and fluctuating concept. There is a simple analogy to describe the difference between these approaches. Positivists believe that truth exists externally to the human being, no matter their interpretation. To interpretivists, truth only exists internally. It is completely subject to human interpretation, meaning that the concept of truth refers to an entirely variable concept. When applying these concepts to researching humans, positivism advocates

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<sup>27</sup> Many more strands of ontology exist, such as:

- Constructivism (reality exists externally but is socially constructed and thus internalised) independently), e.g. Piaget and Well’s (1972) *Psychology and Epistemology: Towards a Theory of Knowledge*
- Realism (reality exists only of what we can perceive through our senses), e.g. John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, originally published in 1824 (Locke and Yolton, 1993)

<sup>28</sup> August Comte (1858) published his work the *Course of Positive Philosophies* in which he argued that social sciences would soon develop to be like the physical sciences and develop a practice in which theories would be established through observation and continuous verification, as to establish universal laws.

the idea that humans are theoretically calculable by nature. Interpretivist researchers would argue that humans are autonomous agents, capable of making unpredictable decisions based on their reflective nature (Gray, 2013). Max Horkheimer (1947) a critical theorist, provides the following critique of a positivist approach:

How is it possible to determine what justly may be called science and truth, if the determination itself presupposes the methods of achieving scientific truth? The same vicious circle is involved in any justification of scientific method by the observation of science: How is the principle of observation itself to be justified? [...] If science is to be the authority that stands firm against obscurantism- and in demanding this the positivists continue the great tradition of humanism and the Enlightenment – philosophers must set up a criterion for the true nature of science. Philosophy must formulate the concept of science in a way that expresses human resistance to the threatening relapse into mythology and madness, rather than further such a relapse by formalizing science and conforming it to the requirements of the existing practice. (Horkheimer, 1947, pp.52-53)

Horkheimer (1947) highlights the importance of having an open mind when exploring subjects, as applying rigid predetermined structures can hinder the accumulation of new knowledge. This research follows an interpretivist ontology, as it values the idea of individuals interpreting their reality in different ways. The interpretation of reality is only one of many philosophical constructs which determine how an individual conducts research. The construct of knowledge is equally as important to understanding a researcher's choices of applied methods.

The research epistemology is a metaphysical concept concerned with the theory of knowledge. An epistemology explores the question of how reality is interpreted and transformed into knowledge (i.e. *what does it mean to know?*). The researcher may evaluate their interaction with their environment to create an understanding of their research subject (Gray, 2013). An interpretivist, for instance, who believes in multiple interpretations of reality, would argue that to fully understand the social world, one would need to study the internal thought processes which lead an individual's actions, such as suggested in Max Weber's (1949) concept of *Verstehen*. An epistemology built upon critical theory lead on from this approach, as it likewise rejects the notion of value-free knowledge but would additionally imply that research is a political act. Critical theory (see Section 2.4) critiques power structures within society. This is

reflected in the application of critical research methods. Critical research attempts to resolve social injustices which result from these power structures and challenges what is established to be “true” (Zeegers and Barron, 2015). Zeegers and Barron (2015) perfectly encapsulate the essence of modern critical research:

Critical theory constantly questions with a view to generating responses that may lead to a more just society [...]. It recognizes that social constructs are NEVER neutral, regardless of various institutions’ organizations as serving the interests of specific groups, thereby alienating others from opportunities that may improve their position in society. It concerns itself with the interests of the least powerful in a society and improving lives through raising consciousness and critique (Zeegers and Barron, 2015, p.65, original emphasis).

This research chooses to question the idea that social services are necessarily always supportive towards the service users and might not necessarily always be effective in lowering rates of inequality. It has designed methods which are considerate of the interests of those who require the services, whilst attempting to discover the systemic flaws which hinder the service structure from succeeding in reducing inequality.

The application of precise research tactics (the “methodology”) draws upon both the epistemological and ontological approaches taken by the researcher. Inductive research attempts to either validate or disprove existing theories through its data. Deductive research positions the researcher within the world of the subject, thus taking a more participatory approach to understanding reality. Deductive research also tends to be less focussed on validating theories than utilising the results of interactions and observations to create new theories (Creswell and Clark, 2011). This research mainly adopted a deductive approach, meaning that it did not begin with a theoretical framework, but rather let the accumulated data “speak for itself”. Whilst it is arguably impossible to conduct social research completely free of bias, it is important to be considerate of the ideas brought forward by the participants. This is particularly relevant to consider when conducting research with vulnerable groups. Vulnerable groups have often already experienced discrimination and stigmatisation by institutions and society. It is important to understand that the participants may have an entirely different stance on a subject matter and avoid contributing to any prejudice the participants may have already faced. As an ethical researcher, it is vital to ensure that the individuals are given the chance to freely express their perspectives and

concerns (Dempsey et al., 2016). Therefore, a phenomenological approach was deemed most appropriate for this research. Phenomenological research focusses entirely on lived experiences (Wolff, 2006). Whilst due consideration was given to individual input, the application of previous knowledge aided the reflective process of developing the further stages of research and putting the data into the wider context.

But at this point, we face a challenge. Methodologically speaking, the ability to fuse critical theory and phenomenology has been widely contested. Critical theory advocates approaching research with a set agenda, whilst phenomenology approaches research with an open agenda, to unbiasedly uncover the motives of participants. How can these two ideologies be fused to conduct research that is equally critical and phenomenological? On the one hand, this research seeks to give the participants a voice. On the other hand, the awareness of societal injustices that cause inequality and the apparent need for social services (which is arguably a subjective construct of knowledge) could be a barrier to truly conducting unbiased research. Some significant figures in critical theory have dismissed phenomenology as a means of supporting rather than questioning the status quo<sup>29</sup>. Pier Aldo Rovatti (1973) offers a solution to this issue. Whilst phenomenology offers a defined methodological approach, traditional critical theory, as pioneered by Marx, was lacking in methodology. Rovatti (1973) justifies his stance by making reference to the fact that phenomenological research fulfils some of the original aims of critical theory, namely, to emancipate those oppressed by the system. Therefore, this research justifies the application of a phenomenological approach backed by a critical ontology. The phenomenological nature of the interviews will seek to uncover any hidden truths about the service structure as a whole and offer the individuals to share their experiences and concerns. The lived experiences of each individual will play a key role in determining the results of the initial data collection phase. These results will initially be portrayed in their raw, unrefined state. However, when putting the results into the wider context, the researcher will reflect upon the findings using knowledge from previous research.

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, Theodore Adorno's *Against epistemology* (1989), as the name suggests, rejects epistemology as a whole, which is developed from a stance against Hegelian phenomenology.



## 4.3 Research Design

### 4.3.1 Overview of methods

Having looked at the philosophical and ideological constructs behind this research, this section will focus on the precise research methods which were applied to collate data. This research aims to provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between services and inequality, which means that it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of all related processes, including:

- how inequality creates a need for service provision,
- how those affected by inequality access and engage with services,
- the areas of inequality are targeted and effectively tackled by service provision,
- the internal (e.g. employee behaviour, internal regulations) and external processes (e.g. policy and legislation) that affect service provision and what consequences this has for the service users.

To create a holistic understanding of services and their role in reducing inequality in Dundee, whilst simultaneously allowing participants to shape the ensuing of the research, it was deemed appropriate to apply a systems methodology. Systems thinking is in itself a way of understanding the world we are researching, as it implies interconnectivity of all elements within a system. Critical systems theory advocates using multiple mixed methods, reflecting upon the implications of the findings from a critical perspective, and thinking about their implications on society as a whole (Kogetsidis, 2012). The findings of this study create a novel understanding of the research subject, whilst contextualising the implications using previous research conducted on the topic. The following sections will detail how this research approached the matter of applying a systems thinking methodology.

Wolf et al. (2015) suggest utilising a triangulation of data, preferably collated on a mixed methods basis as to provide a holistic overview of the research subject. A mixed methods approach means that the research consists both of qualitative and quantitative elements. Mixed methods methodologies involve applying both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods investigate numerical or statistical data, which offer an objective synopsis of the research subject. They have the advantage of being able to identify common themes and patterns throughout the

targeted subject. Some criticisms of quantitative methods include eliminating the “human” element of social research (i.e. emotions, individual experiences). Qualitative research methods, on the other hand, focus on precisely this type of rich, personal data. Qualitative data has been criticised for its lack of applicability to other settings (Creswell and Clark, 2011), but those who utilise qualitative research value this precise characteristic. This research mainly adopts qualitative methods to understanding experiences with services but contextualises these findings through an overview of services within Dundee through a Social Network Analysis (SNA). The benefits of applying a mixed methods approach is captured perfectly by the following quote:

Notwithstanding the strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, weaknesses of one can be compensated by the strength of the other respectively with the aim of gaining further research insights, and to make the research process rigorous and systematic to be accepted by the wider research community (Chowdhury, 2015, p.1138).

This research conducted interviews with service users, support workers and policymakers to gain insight to all areas of service provision (i.e. access/engagement, implementation/execution and planning). All interview phases with service users were developed on a phenomenological basis, meaning that they were tailored to be participant-led. Phenomenological research and systems thinking complement each other very well as holistic, unbiased research approaches, seeking to understand a research subject both internally and externally (Walker, 2013). The pilot interviews (held with service users) served as a rough overview of general circumstances of service users in Dundee. This was meant to serve as a way of allowing participants to express their concerns and their thoughts on what has been successful in supporting their needs. It became clear that the participants of the pilot stage were passionate about the type of service provision available to them, whether it was a positive or a negative experience<sup>30</sup>. The referral process of service users between separate organisations was a key theme which emerged from the initial interviews. A stark contrast in quality of service provision and inequalities in conduct of support workers became evident throughout the interviews. Consequently, it was deemed appropriate

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<sup>30</sup> The exact results which led to the application of a systems methodology will be discussed in the results section.

to investigate this mechanism behind this experience in further detail. This led to the idea of interviewing support workers and contextualising the interviews through SNA of as many Dundee-based support services as possible.

Interviewing policymakers was a decision made almost two years into the project. Both service users and support workers spoke of certain external forces driving changes within the city. The interviews with policymakers were designed to provide an insight into the decision-making processes that drive recommendations for services and how these are implemented. Initially, there was a debate whether this query should be approached through a critical policy analysis. Yet taking into consideration that this research is approaching service provision from a phenomenological perspective, it was thought that researching this matter should stay concordant with the preceding phases and be approached through interviews. Additionally, whilst policies may state the official recommendations made towards services, the interviews with policymakers were thought to provide insight to the recommendations actualised in practice and why certain processes are highlighted more than others. Combining these different methodologies was hoped to provide a holistic overview of how the social phenomena of inequality and the processes driving service provision work with one another, offering an insight both into the micro and macro social processes that drive service provision.

The Dundee Partnership (2012; introduced in section 1.3.4) in Dundee City has taken a multi-agency, partnership approach towards tackling the high levels of poverty and deprivation rates within the city. At face value, partnership working seems to be a holistic, inclusive approach to improving service provision (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). However, the effectiveness of partnership working is lacking in evidence. Some studies have also identified the issues of power disparities both between public and Third Sector services in partnerships (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014) and between services and service users on a general level (Narayan, 2000), demonstrating that there are significant potential flaws within service provision. Wilding (2012) has found that a constraint in systems thinking and partnership working is the assumption that the studied system is the correct system to address the desired issue. So, in this instance, this would mean that the assumption of a support service structure being the correct way to address poverty and deprivation rates could be constraining towards finding the effective means to reducing poverty and deprivation rates. Yet change is a gradual

process, and only by applying analysis to the current status quo can faults be identified and modified. The second objective of this study seeks to explore how services can impact the inequalities experienced by service users and the third objective seeks to identify how partnership working strategies affect service provision (see Section 1.5). Exploring this can give an overview of how service provision and partnership working affect levels of inequality. It was not automatically assumed that service provision would aid in the reduction of inequalities, but rather this research sought out to understand how and why service users access services in times of financial crises and the effect this has on their circumstances on a long-term basis.

#### 4.3.2 Familiarisation with the service network in Dundee City

Prior to conducting any research, the researcher sought to familiarise herself with the service network in the city. This is not an official ethnographical research phase and will not be analysed as such. The following process acted as an initiative for developing the research plan and as a means to becoming a familiar face to support workers and service users. When working with “hard-to-reach” groups, it can be highly beneficial to have a familiarisation period. This familiarisation period provides a range of benefits. It allows the researcher to become familiar with the people in the scene, how relationships are built and what values are important to the participants. On a practical level, it also has the benefit of allowing the researcher to establish trust with the participants. This trust allows for a positive relationship to develop and enables an easier access to individuals for research purposes (Barley and Bath, 2014). The following section will detail how the researcher familiarised herself with the service network in the city prior to conducting the research.

As the fairness commission was the initial driver for the project, the researcher attended both public and private commission meetings. Access to the private commission meetings was made available through a contact at the Dundee City Council. Following this, the researcher sought to contact a range of support organisations, both public and Third Sector, to shadow and partake in some of the service provision. This consisted of shadowing support workers during visits (that were previously approved by the service users) and assisting voluntary organisations by partaking in temporary voluntary work. This was carried out with clear intentions, namely that the researcher was shadowing organisations to gain an overview of the

daily functioning of these services. This process also led to the researcher gaining knowledge about a wider range of services available to and utilised by individuals. This paved the way to gaining an understanding of how service provision is carried out, how service users access the services, and how relationships function between service users and support workers. It also allowed the researcher to realise the multifaceted support structure that exists in the city. This highlighted the importance of researching how the system works. How this was investigated in this research will be detailed in the following sections.

#### 4.3.3 Systems Thinking – Making sense of “social messes”

Systems thinking, as the name suggests, is the study of understanding systems as a whole. Whilst systems thinking was originally used in life sciences, it has found applications in a range of disciplines (Waldman, 2007). Due to the great variety of applications in systems thinking, the precise approaches to research methodologies vary greatly. This is because systems thinking refers to a methodological, philosophical approach, rather than a pre-set array of applicable research methods. For the purposes of this study, it was found to be suitable to analyse microsocial processes through longitudinal qualitative interviews, whilst understanding the macrosocial developments through social network analysis (SNA) of Dundee-based social services. A triangulation of the data will then help to understand the process of poverty alleviation through service provision on a holistic level.

Essentially, systems thinking is a way of looking at a subject in a holistic, comprehensive way, whilst taking into consideration all related entities and their relation to one another. The term system refers to a network of interacting elements or agents. A system is usually made up of several subsystems and can belong to a larger system. Systems theory advocates the idea that because an entire system is interconnected through a vast amount of smaller systems, any change made to one part of the system could have an effect on the system as a whole (Cabrera, Colosi and Lobdell, 2008). Therefore, it is vital to have a deep understanding of the underlying structure as a whole prior to introducing any systemic change.

As a concept derived from the natural sciences, some types of systems theories have been applied directly to the social sciences. Gregerson and Sailer (1993) attempted to apply chaos theory to understand social phenomena. They argued that a failure of

modern social research methods (e.g. cross-sectional studies) called for an innovative approach to measuring behavioural activity. Whilst coming up with promising results, the studies were still inconclusive. Chaos theory is a mathematical model, which was used to solve a range of long-standing scientific mysteries, such as heart arrhythmia or quantum physics. To put the principle into simple terms: a phenomenon is comprehensible and calculable through understanding smaller underlying reactions, and a phenomenon's initial condition determines its future condition. Prior to understanding this concept, the misunderstood phenomena appeared to be acting randomly. It only became clear that measurable and predictable patterns existed when looking at the smaller components of the phenomena and understanding their reactions with one another (Halimi, 2003). Upon first glance, the concept of chaos theory seems to have potential for understanding the complex nature of human interaction and its impact on a wider social network. However, chaos theory requires the exact same initial condition to be able to predict the future condition. Due to the complexities of society and the individualities of space and time, creating a precisely identical initial condition would be impossible.

Quantitative systems applications have yet to be successful in truly creating an applicable model to understand social occurrences<sup>31</sup>. In social sciences, creating a methodology to understand a system in which elements are composed of humans is complex. Humans are independent agents, who are shaped by unique experiences and are influenced by complex, sometimes unpredictable emotions (Peters, 2014). The human brain is shaped by a lifetime of experiences, which is a highly influential element of an individual's decision-making process. With the resources and technology available to humans in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it would be impossible for a researcher to accurately represent the human agent as a subsystem of the larger social system. Creating a homogenous, universal model of a social system would be extremely difficult, or even impossible to create. As of right now, it remains entirely a subjective matter whether or not it will ever be possible to create a universal scientific model of human behaviour. Yet reducing the human element of rational

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<sup>31</sup> See Section 4.6.3 on "Creating a systems dynamic model" for a discussion of practical applications of systems thinking in social research

thought, reflectiveness and compassion to a predictable mechanics seems to be an incomprehensible thought.

Building upon the argument of the complexities of human behaviour, the fact that environments are unique in their existence due to being a product of their one-of-a-kind history offers an additional argument against the possibility of universal social models. Theory on time-space geography refers to this precise phenomenon. It remains apparent that applying models which are based on specific geographic locations or timelines to another is not necessarily scientifically viable. Edith Cobb (1977, cited in Relph, E., 1981) talks about the distinct individuality of the human species, which is caused by our ability to produce reflective thoughts and think critically about our surroundings. Cobb highlights that humans are individual beings, capable of shaping their personality and planning their actions in intricate ways. Edward Relph (1981) underlines this to be a cause for the individuality of social spaces. A physical geographic space, comprised of a distinctive terrain and landscape, is in itself unique. If each geographic space is inhabited by unique individuals, their interactions will create a unique sense of social consciousness. Thus, the production of space will likewise reflect the unique relationships created between the respective individuals.

This concept closely relates to the work of social theorist Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre's *Production of Space* (1991) articulates the notion that spaces are socially constructed and composed of unique elements, which are a result of its individual history and geographic landscape. Lefebvre's work highlighted geographical space as being social at its core. Culture and history are reflected through use of public space (e.g. infrastructure, city planning, architecture). As society is constantly evolving, the production of space is likewise susceptible to change. He argues that a multifaceted array of macro power structures affects the creation of space, yet local elements, such as community organisations, cooperatives, and other similar bodies, reflect the unique interests of the local citizens, demonstrating that a precise replication of a social scenario would be an entirely impossible task. Systems thinking, when applied to specific social structures, should thus mainly serve as a model for understanding and solving contemporary issues. Despite only conducting research within the boundaries of Dundee City, this research aims to produce some universally applicable recommendations towards service provision (see Objective 5 in Section 1.5).

#### 4.3.4 Addressing the need for services – Interviews with service users

As a means of understanding how structural changes have impacted on the lives of those affected, as well as how social services were able to mediate any impacts, a qualitative methodology was adopted in the shape of a longitudinal series of in-depth interviews, comprised of two interview phases. The aim of this research phase is to get an insight to why and how service users interact with the services they access. Before the interviews approached the subject of service interaction, all interviews were initiated with the leading and open-ended statement, “Tell me about yourself”. Allowing the participants to explore their background on their own accord allows for the participants to lead conversations to topics important to them, which is a key attribute of research unbiased by the researcher’s prejudices (Turner III, 2010). Initially, the interviews were intended to be semi-structured, to cover the desired topics (i.e. life/socioeconomic circumstances, access to services, relationship to services). During the pilot phase, it was found that the interview structure was much better suited to an unstructured approach. The beginning of the interviews was uniform, in which the participant was invited to tell the researcher about themselves. This allowed the participant to lead the conversation and focus on issues they perceived as being most pertinent, which is key to the phenomenological approach taken by this research (Wolff, 2006; Dempsey et al., 2016). Participants naturally covered the issues which were originally intended to be explored (e.g. circumstances leading to service access, nature of relationship, effect of service provision). This approach allowed the conversation to flow much more naturally, which assists in diminishing any imbalances in power between researcher and participants (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). This was intended to provide a rich understanding of the decisions which drive individuals to access services, particularly for those who were initially reluctant to access services and inform services on which methods genuinely make people feel like they are being supported. Whereas quantitative studies may find out how services seemingly support individuals, for instance by looking at the difference in employment rates or income levels, these interviews were designed to understand how service users perceive the support they receive and how they value it.

Longitudinal qualitative studies have the benefit of being able to monitor developments over time (Farall, 2006). Calman, Bronton, and Molassiotis (2013) conducted longitudinal qualitative interviews with cancer patients, to capture the



effects of transitions in care and the perceived impacts this had had on their journey. The participants' perception of change played a key role within their research. Through the longitudinal process, participants were able to identify events or agents which were perceived as having high importance in the development or stagnation of certain elements within their lives. This is an element which this research phase wished to achieve, to illuminate the drivers behind the change in individuals' circumstances, whether this is a decision-making process or an external factor. This research sought to gain a deeper understanding of the journey individuals go through prior to and during a position of financial duress. This information could provide a better understanding of how to prevent, or at least alleviate the difficulties that arise from being in such circumstances. How, and even if, services play a role in this process is also one of great significance to this research, as this knowledge could provide a key insight to where funding for services should focus. The insight on how services play a role will come mainly from this research phase but will also be guided by the following research phases, which focus explicitly on service provision.

#### 4.3.5 Understanding services— Interviewing support workers and mapping local services

Having looked at the impact of services on service users, it was then important to understand how services function, both internally and externally. This stage of the research was focussed on how partnership working has taken shape, as well as to provide an overview of services available in Dundee. A social network analysis (SNA) via means of a service mapping activity was found to be the most suitable approach to analysing the relationships between organisations. SNA can offer a detailed insight into interactions between various agents (Borgatti et al., 2009). When applied to organisational structures, SNA can help to understand the distribution and flow of resources, and the processes that drive cooperative planning (Nicaise et al., 2013). These are the key elements which this research phase seeks to uncover.

As organisations consist of multiple individuals, they can be considered as a social grouping. Social constructions such as the regulations of bureaucracy make the interactions between organisations much more stable than those between individuals. Despite regulations, however, organisations are still comprised of individuals, who make complex and sometimes unpredictable decisions, thus adding to the dynamic

and adaptive tendencies of inter-organisational relations (Katz and Kahn, 1966). Applying SNA can help to create a model that is capable of capturing both these static and dynamic properties. Capturing both the micro and macro processes within the network is essential to creating a holistic understanding of how the network functions (Crozier, 1972).

The Social Network Analysis provides a quantitative overview of relations between services and who interacts with whom. Whilst the SNA is a quantitative approach, the purpose of this was to demonstrate relationships between organisations within the wider network. Due to the vastness of the service network in Dundee, which is comprised of hundreds of organisations, it may be difficult for individual workers to identify key actors within the network, despite recognising power relations to organisations they interacted with. Interviews with support workers were held to provide a deep insight to the internal processes and potential constraints that exist within organisations. The interviews act as a sort of case study analysis on the previous research stage. They add a qualitative element to the quantitative SNA. The aim of this research phase was to understand the relationship between service user and support worker from the support worker's perspective, as well as to understand some of the processes within services that affect service provision, and how partnership working affects these processes.

A practical systems approach which investigates multiple parts of the system can find hidden systemic flaws and aim to improve them. Luhmann (1988, in: Wolf et al., 2010) suggests not only interviewing agents from multiple positions within the systems about what happens, but how it happens and their perspective on these occurrences. This allows the researcher to gain a more holistic understanding of processes within a social setting. The interviews with the support workers were aimed to provide precisely this type of information. These interviews differed from the interviews conducted with service users as they focussed more on the functioning of the services than gaining a complete life story. This was not seen as being relevant towards the research objectives in this case. Personal reflections within the workspace were sought, but the personal life of the workers was not considered to be relevant towards the understanding of the processes.

SNA can be used as a main methodological approach. In this case, it has been used to complement the understanding of the larger systemic process targeting poverty and deprivation rates. Whilst the service structure in Dundee has external influences (policymakers, funding bodies, etc.), the relational ties between services are so complex that they require an analysis of their own. SNA can assist to understand these relationships in the following way:

[...] the social network approach views organizations in society as a system of objects (e.g. people, groups, organizations) joined by a variety of relationships. Not all pairs of objects are directly joined, and some are joined by multiple relationships. Network analysis is concerned with the structure and patterning of these relationships and seeks to identify both their causes and consequences. (Tichy, Tushman and Fombrun, 1979: 507)

SNA is particularly useful for studying the relationships between organisations, as the complex web of inter-organisational communications can be clarified through analytical tools and a simplified visual diagram. It could be used longitudinally to understand the dynamic relationships over time (Tichy, Tushman and Fombrun, 1979), which would be a valuable tool to understanding how services build relationships with one another and why others cease to exist. This study did not include this element of the SNA, as the aim was solely to reach an understanding of the existing relationships between services, but this constitutes an insightful follow-on project.

Few, if any studies on Third and public sector partnership working have been carried out from a systems perspective. This study has been guided by some insight from SNA studies from other service networks. Whilst still sparse in data, interesting types of network analysis have been conducted within the realm of mental health services. Morrissey et al. (1994) (in Nicaise et al., 2013) conducted a study on the effectiveness of mental health services. The study focussed on the following interactions between services: referrals, planning coordination, and resource flow. Understanding these interactions helped to identify three key elements of social networks: centrality, fragmentation and density. The concept of centrality helps to identify key agents within a network (i.e. actors who have strong connections with multiple agents). They are characterised by “betweenness-centrality”, which is a measure to determine how often an actor lies on the path between two other actors. SNA can help identify key actors, which cooperate with other actors, but also identify outliers that are not as

integrated into the greater network (Nicaise et al., 2013, p.334). It is important to note that quantity of nodes does not necessarily determine the quality of interaction between the actors. For instance, an organisation that refers individuals to many services may not necessarily be as effective as an organisation that refers individuals to a smaller, more carefully chosen list of organisations. Nicaise et al. (2013, p.334) utilised the measure of betweenness-centrality to identify four types of services within a network: coordinator (if it linked nodes belonging to the same group), representative (if it belonged to a “sender group”, i.e. directed information or resources towards others), gatekeeper (when it belonged to a “receiver group”) and liaison (when it belonged to no group). This research will apply a similar measure of analysis.

An online survey was designed to obtain the following information from Dundee-based services:

- Name of the organisation,
- Type of organisation (charity, social enterprise, co-operative, etc.)
- Foundation year,
- Organisational aim/objective,
- Funding bodies, and
- Referrals made to and received from other organisations.

The survey was distributed to services via e-mail. Using the online platform SurveyMonkey allowed for a simple data collection process. The e-mails were addressed to the head of the organisation, but in some cases where a direct contact was not available a general contact or enquiry address was used. Lists of service providers were accessed using online databases and registries. Whilst some organisations may have had ties to organisations outside of Dundee, this study solely focussed on organisations within the boundaries of Dundee City. This study exclusively focuses on the referral process as a measure of organisational links, as it is indicative of which organisations work together and which organisations are trusted by others to work with a client (Sheehy, 2017). The study does not include some of the more extensive elements of a network, such as shared objectives or knowledge exchange. This is something that could be furthered in future research. However, as this research was focussed on the effects of service provision specifically on service users, it was found to be more suitable to focus on the referral process.

#### 4.3.6 Understanding external impacts upon service provision – Interviews with policymakers

The final research phase serves to provide a deeper understanding of the external influences upon policy provision which exist upon the social service system. Cooper's (2013) critical system theory advocates contextualising human behaviour through looking at wider influences within the network. To understand the practicality of the impacts, rather than solely the content of the policy documents themselves, interviews were conducted with policymakers who have an influence on how services are carried out in Dundee City. The power dynamic within these interviews was very different from that of previous interviews, and most interviews for that matter. The researcher is generally considered to be the one "in power", particularly in non-participatory research in which clear boundaries exist between "researcher" and "participant" (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). This does not imply that researchers are superior to interviewees, but rather that there is a certain vulnerability to being interviewed. Whilst the interviewer attempted to neutralise any ostensible power dynamics within the interview setting of all interviews, the reality is that power dynamics are ingrained within society and for some individuals these power dynamics can feel very real. The power dynamic of these interviews could be interpreted as interviewing "upward", as the policymakers could be viewed as having more power than the interviewer. Katherine Smith (2005), who refers to "elite" interviews, elaborated that whilst power dynamics are incredibly complex and categorising individuals as "elite" implicitly implies a dichotomy of superiority versus inferiority, acknowledging the perceived authority of certain figures can be extremely beneficial for the researcher in preparing for these very different interviews. The interviews are different not solely because of the power relations, but because these individuals will be more accustomed to speaking in these settings than the general population. It is important to note that these individuals will have experience with being interviewed and are quite likely to want the research to present themselves in the best light (Bradshaw, 2001, in: Smith, 2005). It was thought that anonymising these interviews could partially resolve this issue and allow the participants to speak more freely.

## 4.4 Participants

### 4.4.1 Longitudinal interviews with service users

#### 4.4.1.1 Access

Being the most significant part of this study, this recruitment of service users for the longitudinal interviews was very time consuming. There was no pressure to gain a very high number of participants for generalisation purposes, but rather this project sought to speak to individuals willing to share their experiences for the purpose of increasing knowledge on the lives of service users and how their experiences could potentially shape service provision in future. Participant recruitment was enabled through contacts with a number of Dundee-based public and Third Sector organisations. Both the researcher and her contact at Dundee City Council initiated contact with organisations they have either interacted with in past engagements, or initiated contact with throughout the course of the research. During the contact with organisations, which was detailed previously in the chapter (see Section 4.3.2), the researcher provided services with copies of participant information sheets (see Appendix 1) and a brief questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The services handed these out to service users. Based on the information they received through the documents, the individuals could then independently decide whether to partake in the research. This style of participant recruitment is not known to result in a high response rate. As this research favoured interest over number of participants, it was deemed more suitable to this research. There is also the ethical matter of not wanting to force individuals to participate in such sensitive research, therefore this recruitment method was deemed wholly suitable.

In some cases, the participants independently contacted the researcher via a work telephone. In most cases however the service users contacted the researcher via the support worker to declare an interest in the research. The questionnaire was initially designed to assist in selecting participants should there be a large response rate. However, as it took over a year to accumulate the 23 participants, it was not necessary to use the survey for this purpose. The survey was not designed to have a larger analytical impact, but rather to provide a brief overview of the individuals' demographics, such as age, gender and employment status. Once the surveys were collected, the researcher would then make contact with the service users either via the

services they attended or via the contact details written on the survey. The interviews were held in locations familiar to the service user, required to be both within a public location to ensure safety of both participant and researcher, and private enough to ensure confidentiality of the interviews. An example of this would be a private discussion room within the building of the regularly accessed services. This will be further detailed in the ethics section of this chapter (see Section 4.5).

A non-probability, venue-based sampling method was employed to access participants. This has previously been reported as being the most straightforward process in recruiting individuals from vulnerable groups, whilst also allowing for a mixed demography (Fanzana and Srunv, 2001). The sole requirement for participation was that the individual must either currently be accessing a social service or have accessed a social service in the past to resolve any type of concern related to welfare, low income, or other financial issues. The researcher sought to contact all drop-in and welfare advice organisations in Dundee, irrespective of funders or links to other organisations. Whilst the researcher did indeed attempt to contact every organisation within Dundee City related to welfare support in any way, it is possible that some smaller or temporary organisations were not included. Participant numbers accumulated very slowly initially, which is perhaps due to the sensitive nature of the interview questions and the chaotic nature of the service user's lifestyle. To increase participant numbers, this research simultaneously employed a snowball sampling technique. Participants and service providers played a large role in the recruitment process. As previously mentioned, there were some points to consider and counter as to build a rapport with service users and support workers. Why this is important will be elaborated in the following section.

This study was successful in reaching what are sometimes referred to as "hard-to-reach" groups, or as this study prefers, individuals with very complex needs. Some of the participants were homeless, some had suffered abuse, and many were recovering or ex-addicts (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Balda, 2016). The fact that these interviews were to be conducted with these "hard-to-reach" groups meant that certain considerations had to be in place. Due to a Masters dissertation project carried out in a similar field, previous volunteering experiences in the Third Sector, and having attended several Fairness Commission meetings, the researcher was already acquainted with some of the service providers and thus also, some of the service users.

As the interviews were to be conducted on a sensitive issue with potentially very vulnerable individuals, service providers who were unfamiliar with the researcher were reluctant to provide access to individuals for research projects. This concern was often expressed by service providers as a warning that individuals may not want to revisit any traumatic experiences. The service providers were advised that this was not the purpose of this research and that the researcher would not ask the participants to expand on any stories that were making the participant uncomfortable, and the aim of this research was mainly to understand experiences surrounding service provision. It was hoped that the familiarity with organisations could build the trust towards the researchers' intentions.

Evidence from other research supports the thinking that long-term community contact can be beneficial to research participation (Bonevski et al., 2014). One issue which was particularly of interest to the researcher as well as the Dundee City Council was to interview individuals who have had little to no contact with services but feel that they potentially require support. Four individuals who have had no service engagement other than a home visit to assist with financial issues participated in this study. Other than that, most participants were well integrated into the service network, many having participated in other research projects or were otherwise heavily involved in the community. This allowed for participant numbers to snowball. The following section will detail the sample of participants which partook in this research phase.

#### 4.4.1.2 Sample

A summary of participants is shown in Table 4.1. In total 23 participants (12 male, 11 female, age range= 18-59, mean age=41) from eight different organisations took part in the initial research phase, of which 12 took part in the follow-up interviews. The organisations consisted of three public advice services, three church-led soup kitchens, and two independent charities (see Table 4.1). All participants were white British, which reflects the lack of ethnic diversity within this study<sup>32</sup>. Despite having a great range of most demographics, such as age range, gender, employment status, and even achieving the desired variation in service access types, one limitation of this study is

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<sup>32</sup> The pseudonyms originate from the English language to reflect the British heritage of all participants.



its lack of ethnic diversity. This is particularly pertinent as Dundee City has the fourth highest proportion of ethnic minorities within Scotland at 6% compared to the Scottish average of 4% (Scotland Census, 2013, p.16)<sup>33</sup> . Since 4% of the population is still rather low and with a participant number of 23 it would have been difficult to achieve a high proportion of ethnic minority participants, but it should still be mentioned that this is a limitation of this study. Thus, it does not necessarily represent the life circumstances of those in similar situations who may face additional barriers that correlate with belonging to an ethnic minority group.

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<sup>33</sup> This data is derived from a summary of the 2011 Census, but as the summary was published in 2013, the reference contains this date.

**Table 4.1** List of participants in the current study

|    | <b>Participant pseudonym</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Type of organisation through which participants were recruited</b> | <b>Interview phase participation</b> |
|----|------------------------------|---------------|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1  | Abigail                      | F             | 36         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 2  | Beatrice                     | F             | 57         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 3  | Charles                      | M             | 38         | Church-led soup kitchen   | 1, 2                                 |
| 4  | Diana                        | F             | 31         | Church-led soup kitchen   | 1                                    |
| 5  | Eric                         | M             | 59         | Church-led soup kitchen   | 1                                    |
| 6  | Frank                        | M             | 43         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 7  | Gordon                       | M             | 48         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 8  | Harry                        | M             | 50         | Church-led soup kitchen   | 1, 2                                 |
| 9  | Isabell                      | F             | 46         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 10 | James                        | M             | 39         | Church-led soup kitchen   | 1, 2                                 |
| 11 | Karl                         | M             | 25         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 12 | Lewis                        | M             | 18         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 13 | Michael                      | M             | 53         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 14 | Nicole                       | F             | 49         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 15 | Olivia                       | F             | 24         | Public advice service   | 1                                    |
| 16 | Penny                        | F             | 48         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 17 | Quinn                        | M             | 19         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 18 | Rosie                        | F             | 29         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 19 | Sam                          | M             | 53         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 20 | Tina                         | F             | 44         | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 21 | Ugo                          | M             | n/a        | Independent charity   | 1, 2                                 |
| 22 | Veronica                     | F             | 24         | Public advice service   | 1, 2                                 |
| 23 | Warren                       | M             | 59         | Public advice service   | 1, 2                                 |

#### 4.4.2 Interviews with support workers – access and sample

The access to the support workers was achieved in a much simpler way than with the service users, as the ethical considerations were not as significant. Initially, the research sought to conduct interviews with support workers identified through relevant case studies from the SNA, however it was not possible to arrange interviews with

individuals from every case study due to their vast workload and lack of time. Nevertheless, the two organisations with the most distinctive referral styles were able to take part in the study. Participants were sent electronic versions of the participants information sheets (see Appendix 3) prior to participating and completed a consent form prior to the interview (see Appendix 5). The participants were selected to reflect the greatest variety in partnership working styles. This sampling method is a style of purposive sampling called heterogenous or maximum variation sampling. In theory, maximum variation refers to a variation in personal characteristics, but in this case a variation in inter-organisational relations was pursued. The study used a phenomenal variation sampling technique, which means that the participants were chosen by their variation in the phenomenon (i.e. service type) being studied. The maximum variation technique is frequently used in qualitative research that seeks to provide an insight to a variation of participants (Sandelowski, 1995).

Five interviews were conducted with workers from the following types of organisations:

- Social work,
- Welfare/financial advice,
- Soup kitchen,
- Foodbank
- Community group.

As with the previous research phase, the participants of this phase were also all white British. The prevalence of female support workers is also reflected within this sample, as only one of the participants was male. The interviewees were not given pseudonyms and will not be linked to the organisations they work for as some quotes may compromise confidentiality. The interviewees were informed that their information would stay anonymous to allow a more open and honest discussion. The interviews were held in private rooms located within the respective services. This was most convenient for the support workers as they partook in the research during their work hours.

#### 4.4.3 Interviews with policymakers – access and sample

The researcher purposively contacted policymakers who were on the Council board for issues related to this research. This was done via a document available on the internet which named the individuals responsible for certain service domains (e.g. welfare, housing). The precise issues of the chosen participants will not be mentioned as not to reveal the identities of those who participated. Three participants were recruited for this research phase, of five who were contacted. This is an extremely small sample size; however, this is validated by two reasons. Firstly, the pool of potentially relevant participants was already extremely small to begin with. Secondly, this research phase aims to provide some experiential context to the actualisation of written policy, so a larger quantity of information is not necessarily more valuable than some detailed accounts from subject experts.

The participants for this section were directly contacted via telephone through contact details available on documents or online. All the individuals had secretaries or personal assistants who took the details of the study, subsequently arranging a time for a call-back. Participants were sent electronic versions of the participants information sheets (see Appendix 3) prior to participating. Three of the seven individuals contacted phoned back to arrange an interview. Unfortunately, due to the nature of their occupation, it was not possible to arrange face-to-face interviews. This preference was stated by the assistants. Whether this preference is indeed motivated by time constraints or rather a level of mistrust is unknown. Instead, these interviews were chosen to be conducted via telephone. This means that some of the human, emotional data is lost, but as these interviews focussed more on the structural processes that guide partnership working than on the individuals' personal experience, this was not considered to be a substantial impediment.

#### 4.4.4 Social Network Analysis

##### 4.4.4.1 Access

The researcher contacted 131 organisations to take part in this part of the research. The researcher mainly sent e-mails, or in cases where an e-mail address was not available for an organisation, the researcher contacted a representative via telephone. The information for these organisations was mainly found online, meaning that the contact details were publicly available. In some cases, the researcher contacted the

service providers directly through contact details that were available through the voluntary and shadowing work mentioned earlier in the chapter (see section 4.3.2).

#### 4.4.4.2 Sample

Of the 131 organisations who were contacted, 35 organisations participated in the survey and a further 7 took part in the survey over the telephone or in person. That means a total of 42 organisations provided information for the SNA. From these 42 organisations, the SNA was able to provide information on 112 organisations in total. This means that the 42 participating organisations provided links to an additional 70 organisations. Whilst the information provided by these 70 organisations is incomplete, as the organisations themselves did not participate, the number of organisations named within this survey shows how far-reaching the network in Dundee City is.

### 4.5 Ethics

#### 4.5.1 General ethical considerations during all interviews

This section will look at the research axiology (i.e. ethical considerations that were taken prior to research). Due to the nature of conducting research on inequality and deprivation, strict ethical considerations were set in place prior to conducting the research. To ensure safety of the researcher, both supervisors (Dr Beverley Searle and Dr Carlo Morelli) were informed of the exact times and locations of meetings. The meetings were held in public locations to ensure the safety of both parties. The researcher always carried a mobile phone as a means of contacting her supervisors in case of an emergency.

Participant confidentiality was a main concern throughout all interview stages. It was important to ensure confidentiality after recording of the sensitive audio data. The audio recordings were completed using a password-protected recording device. Following the interviews, the data was transferred to the researcher's personal computer, which is password-protected and inaccessible to others. The audio was solely used by the interviewer for transcription and analysis purposes. The interviews were suitably anonymised, replacing names with pseudonyms and omitting or editing other personal data. The process of which data will be omitted, and which will remain in the publicised version will be discussed in detail with the participant. Once the

interviews were transcribed, the transcription was uploaded to secure, password-protected online data storage, to which only the researcher will have access. These measures are in place to ensure no others have access to the sensitive interview data. Service users and support workers filled out consent forms prior to the interviews (see Appendices 4 and 5), whilst policymakers gave verbal consent over the phone.

#### 4.5.2 Interviews with service users

The most prevalent ethical consideration of this study was the recruitment and engagement with financially vulnerable adults. The sole requirement for participation was that individuals were seeking support for financial or welfare reasons. Therefore, it was to be expected that participants were highly likely to be in a vulnerable state. It was important to recognise that financially vulnerable adults may find themselves in further states of vulnerability, as this is a common phenomenon amongst individuals living in deprivation (Dempsey et al., 2016). The participants could potentially have fallen under categories which require further ethical considerations, such as being pregnant, having learning or communication difficulties, or being involved in illegal activities. Whilst participants were not sought out on the basis of the previously mentioned categories, it was important to consider the possibility of engaging with further vulnerabilities. The researcher has had past experience of working with vulnerable adults during placements and voluntary work and has an up to date PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) scheme disclosure form. The rest of this section details the ethical considerations which were put in place prior to, during and after the interview process. This is elaborated in explicit detail in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2** Ethical considerations throughout the research process

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Before | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organisations were approached and informed about the study.</li> <li>2. If willing to participate, the researcher visited the service provider, bringing along information sheets to hand out to service users.</li> <li>3. The actual recruitment process was carried out by service providers. If service users were interested in participation, the service provider would offer further information. Upon the participants' request, the service provider would pass on an information sheet and an initial questionnaire (see Appendices 2 and 3).</li> <li>4. The service provider then acted as a medium between the researcher and the participants.</li> </ol> |
| During | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The researcher provided a consent form to the participant and reminded them of their rights (see Appendix 4). Upon request, unclear elements were clarified.</li> <li>2. The researcher conducted the interview at the pace of the participant. The participant led the conversation to cover topics that were important to them.</li> <li>3. However, the researcher gave due consideration to avoid additional probing on topics which were causing the participant any distress.</li> </ol>   |
| After  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The participant was given a £5 supermarket voucher per interview as compensation for their time and effort.</li> <li>2. The researcher always carried a list of accessible services in Dundee to hand to the participants after the interview (see Appendix 6).</li> </ol>   |

During contact with the participating organisations, procedures were put in place to ensure that the participants had time to consider their participation. The researcher and the respective service provider met to discuss the precise interview procedure and structure, the participant's rights, and how the interviews fit into the broader research plan. This gave the organisations chance to clarify any concerns they may have had towards the participants' safety and emotional wellbeing. If interested in participating, information sheets were circulated within the organisation. This also gave a chance for potential participants to discuss their decision with a trusted support worker.

Upon contact with the researcher, a meeting place was arranged with the participants. The location was determined by considering:

- ease of access for the participants to minimise any travel costs,

- a public sphere as to ensure safety of the researcher and the participant, and
- a private room to ensure confidentiality of the information shared.

Most commonly, interviews were held in private rooms of the referring organisation. Upon meeting, the researcher would then provide the participant with a consent form (see Appendix 4). By reading the consent forms together, participants were informed of how the research will be carried out, the reasons for the research, their right to discontinue involvement in the research at any time, and how their data will be anonymised. The participants were also asked for permission to record the interviews, whilst being reminded that the sole purpose of the recordings was to provide a basis for transcription.

## 4.6 Data analysis

### 4.6.1 Interview analysis

The aim of the longitudinal interview stage was to understand the rich details of participants' life experiences which led to them requiring support from services, as well as the details of the relationships they had developed with their service providers over time. It was important that the analysis stage was considerate of the vast amount of rich data collected in this phase. The interviews were audio-recorded and complemented by reflective notes taken by the researcher following the interview process. The reflective notes contained comments on the general atmosphere of the interaction between researcher and participant, body language, and any other noteworthy occurrences. The interviews with support workers and policymakers were recorded in the same manner as the user interviews. They were audio-recorded, then transcribed and analysed using the programme NVivo. The interviews with service users were focussed on individual experience and reflection. In contrast, the interviews with support workers and policymakers included an element of personal reflection and experience but were mainly conducted to understand the procedural and structural elements of partnership working. Despite these differences, an open coding approach was deemed appropriate also for these interviews, as the researcher was hoping to gain novel insight into the processes that drive service provision and partnership working.

As a means of generating more readily interpretable data, the interviews were transcribed to a written format. The process of transcription has the benefit of allowing



the data to become manageable, whilst allowing the researcher to reengage deeply with interview data. This process allows the researcher to gain significant preliminary insights to the data they have collected (Green, Franquiz and Dixon, 1997). The richness of the transcriptions was amplified through due regard of social behaviours, such as laughter, voice tones or long pauses. These behaviours were noted by the researcher following the interview process. Reflecting on these behaviours allowed the researcher to add additional richness to the transcription, which is an important element to evaluating the deeper significance of the interaction between researcher and participant (Roberts, 2004). The aim of this transcription style was to provide rich details of the lived experiences recalled by the participants.

Following the transcription process of the interviews, it was necessary to systematise the data to highlight key findings. Coding allows researchers to identify recurring patterns and themes which are located within qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). Different types of coding exist. Some researchers apply a deductive coding approach. This means that researchers have a list of predetermined themes which are searched for within the transcriptions (Stuckey, 2015). This is distinctive of a deductive research approach, meaning that researchers attempt to validate a theory through their data (Creswell and Clark, 2011). As this research is taking an inductive approach and applying a phenomenological epistemology, an open coding approach was deemed more suitable to the process. Open coding refers to the process of scanning through the transcription data whilst taking note of the themes that occur within the text. The open coding process is intended to assist the researcher in eliminating prejudice (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Initially, this may result in a vast sum of codes, yet this approach complements the unstructured interview by allowing the data to ‘speak for itself’. Open coding is a methodology that was developed as part of what is called ‘grounded theory’. Grounded theory was introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and refers to theory which is derived from the data<sup>34</sup>. It is an inductive research approach. However, it can be argued that it is impossible to be completely unled by preconceptions that we have as humans, as they determine how we interpret and

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<sup>34</sup> The two sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory during a study in a hospital on the awareness of dying, as it was untypical in that era to tell patients that they have a terminal illness. They found that solely applying and attempting to verify theory that already existed would not have been sufficient in elaborating the experiences of the patients, therefore sought to establish a new type of methodology which allowed for the creation of new theory.

engage with the world on a day-to-day basis, which relates back to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'habitus'. As researchers, it is imperative to remain vigilant as to remain as unbiased as possible and this is best done through personal reflection and awareness of one's own preconceptions. Applying methodologies such as open coding can assist in countering these prejudices to achieve the most unbiased results possible.

As with any other research methodology, there are certain drawbacks to applying open coding. Debate exists whether coding can ever be a truly 'open' process, as human psychology determines that all humans have a certain amount of preconceived notions in their perceptive field (Blair, 2015). This relates back to the debate discussed earlier in the chapter whether research can ever truly be unbiased (see Section 4.3.1). This difference in perception may also result in different codes being generated by different researchers, reducing the research inter-rater reliability<sup>35</sup> (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

As a means of producing well-organised data on a resourceful basis, the coding software NVivo was utilised for data analysis. Particularly when working with a large amount of data, NVivo can assist in providing an easily manageable and editable overview of the codes stemming from the transcripts (Richards, 1999). Utilising this software enabled a simplified second stage to the coding process. Condensing the vast amount of initial codes into fewer overarching themes is defined as "axial coding". The full coding frameworks which were developed through this method can be found in Appendix 7.

The longitudinal element of this study was analysed by comparing the coded data from the individuals' interviews over time. Looking at the factors which influenced a transition in the individuals' circumstances, decision-making or outlook can be valuable insight to understanding the dynamics that underpin their lives (Oosterveld-Vlug et al., 2013). This was adapted as less prescribed and more open mode of analysis. The researcher wrote down notes on the individuals' circumstances and outlook during the initial interview, then compared them to notes on their circumstances and outlook during the final interview. This gave the researcher an opportunity to reflect upon which changes had occurred.

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<sup>35</sup> In this case, the term "inter-rater" means between researchers.

#### 4.6.2 Social network analysis

The aim of the Social Network Analysis was to provide an overview of the services available in Dundee and, more importantly, their relationship to one another. Whilst this research phase was aimed to be descriptive rather than deeply analytical, it is hoped to gain some insights to how Dundee-based services interact with one another. The questionnaire was structured to gain a very superficial overview of relationships between services. This was done by asking organisations to whom they make referrals, from whom they receive referrals, and building a network map based on the responses. SNA utilises specialist terminology, which is important to understand prior to conducting the analysis. The following paragraphs will elaborate the conceptual thinking behind SNA before expanding on how it was applied in this research.

Social Network Analysis, as the name suggests, is the study of networks between individuals or groups of individuals. Individual actors, or in this study, organisations, are referred to as “nodes”. Applying SNA in research can help to elaborate how relationships are established and help to determine specific traits of these relationships. Relationships, or “ties”, between these nodes can be analysed through different levels of characteristics, such as “similarities, social relations, interactions, and flows” (Borgatti et al., 2013). Traditionally, SNA was developed to look at networks between individuals, but it has been applied to networks or organisations. Nicaise et al. (2013) published a paper on an international SNA of mental health organisations, detailing the process behind their network analysis in expansive detail. The following section will look at individual node characteristics, drawing back to how Nicaise et al. (2013) applied these means of analysis, which were originally intended for individuals, to organisations.

The term centrality is frequently used as a measure of analysis. Centrality refers to a node’s position within the wider network (Freeman, 1977). Some studies refer to levels of centrality as the first level of analysis, but Nicaise et al. (2013) used linkage density and all-degree levels as the first level of analysis. Linkage density of a network can be measured through the number of degrees, or ties, a node forms with other nodes, i.e. a basic measure of the number of relationships one actor has with others. This is referred to as degree-centrality. The next level of centrality is categorised as betweenness-centrality (Freeman, 1977). Betweenness-centrality is determined when

a node is commonly used to connect other nodes along the shortest possible linking path. High betweenness-centrality can indicate a high level of power of a node, due to its ability to influence a large number of other actors within the network (Borgatti et al., 2009). In this study, organisations that refer individuals to other organisations are expected to have a high level of betweenness-centrality. Betweenness-centralisation refers to the betweenness-centrality measure of the network as a whole. Betweenness-centralisation ranges between 0 and 1, with 0 meaning that all nodes possess an equal level of betweenness-centrality, whereas 1 means that one node possess the entire betweenness-centrality of the network, i.e. making it the most powerful node within the system (Nicaise et al. 2013). This measure essentially tells us how balanced the relations are between the actors of a network.

In this study, nodes were characterised by their service type and split into categories of participant and non-participant. The data was input into the online Social Network Analysis software (Kumu.io). This tool is capable of calculating network characteristics such as the previous described centrality measures, such as betweenness-centrality and degree-centrality, providing information on communities within a network, and creating visual representations of these relationships. A social network map was created to visualise the referral process between organisations, and this was amplified through a detailed portrayal of case studies. These case studies were selected by the types of relationships they had built with other organisations. This will be elaborated further in Section 6.4.2.

#### 4.6.3 Creating a systems dynamic model

The methodology used in this study has taken an innovative approach to systems thinking, combining research methods from systems thinking in human geography and business studies. In the social sciences, systems thinking is intended to offer a holistic insight to a complex system of processes. Systems thinking in the social sciences can be applied as a creative epistemology which inspires alternative thinking and drives organisational change through novel insights. In business studies, systems thinking is used to provide a detailed insight into the functioning of a current business model, usually with the goal of identifying faults within the system (Kogetsidis, 2012). Systems thinking methodology which takes the evolving and unpredictable nature of social structures into consideration can be highly beneficial in identifying the

processes which drive or hinder change. Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory, for instance, compensates for this unpredictability. CAS refers to a dynamic network of agents acting simultaneously, constantly reacting to and engaging with the other agents' actions, which then influences the development of the network as a whole. CAS has played a large role in geography as tools for developing resilience strategies to environmental threats. CAS methodology involves transforming data into a causal loop diagram (i.e. an overview of positive/negative cause and effect) (Holland, 1999). This research will adapt a qualitative variation of the causal loop diagram, which will be explained throughout the following paragraphs.

Checkland (1981) introduced the concept of soft systems methodology (SSM) as a way of modelling businesses and managing change. This approach was developed as a means for businesses to reevaluate their strategies from a holistic perspective. When initially applying a "hard systems approach", which assumes that a problem within the network is well-defined, Checkland discovered that different actors within the system defined structural issues, structural purpose and even the system itself from different viewpoints. This means that whilst a traditional systems model might have solved issues for some actors, the issues as perceived by other actors within the network may have remained unresolved. SSM is a type of inductive non-biased approach to systems thinking, which is perfectly suitable to the epistemology of this research. Wolf et al. (2010) support the concept of a triangulation of methods to provide a holistic overview of a system. They add that management can define discourse used within a network, and therefore it is important to try to look past the semantics used within a system. Qualitative methods can be insightful here, as they provide a methodology which can demonstrate interpretation and reception of values by other workers in the system

These listed methodologies advocate a holistic approach to understanding systems by interviewing as many actors as possible. However, few include individuals who access services provided by the organisations, focussing solely on individuals employed within the network. The aim of interviewing those accessing services is to provide an overview of life circumstances which drive individuals to accessing those services, whether service provision has been successful, and to understand the relationships that developed between the service users and their person of contact. The complexity of the life circumstances which drove the individuals to access support intertwines with the chaotic structure of the social services which target inequality.

## “Wicked problems”

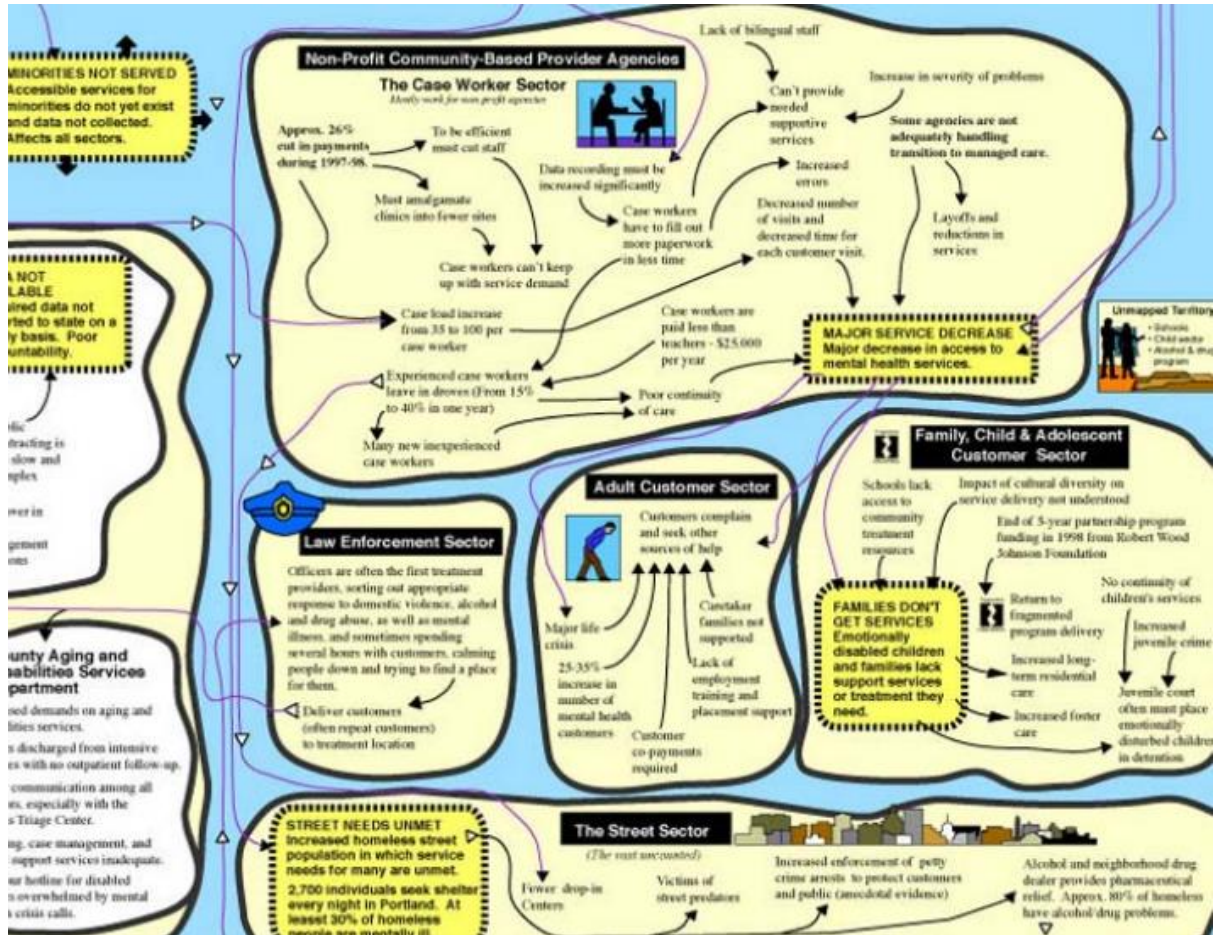
Characteristics:

1. Wicked problems are difficult to define absolutely and are unique.
2. Wicked problems are symptoms of other social “ills”.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are difficult to define due to their interdependencies with other social issues.
4. Solutions to wicked problems may have unintended consequences and are thus neither “good” nor “bad”.

**Figure 4.1** The characteristics of wicked problems

*Source: Rittel and Webber, 1973, pp.161-167*

Targeting inequality, poverty and deprivation through social services has one key disadvantage: the desired goal is much too broad to concretely define, and the target area is affected by a great range of social influences. Therefore, finding an adequate solution can be a highly complex task. Rittel and Webber (1973) defined these issues as “wicked” problems, or social messes (see Figure 4.1). Wicked problems are defined by the lack of ability to find a simple solution. There is no sole solution to eradicating the problem. Therefore, quantifying the systemic issues associated with resolving inequality seem almost impossible, despite systems thinking offering an appropriately holistic approach.



**Figure 4.2** An example of a mess map as a means to improving mental health services in Multnomah, Oregon  
 Source: Horn and Weber (2007)

Horn and Weber (2007) developed the concept of "mess maps" as a response to these "wicked problems". Mess maps are a qualitative approach to systems thinking, which are thought to provide a starting point for policymakers, committees and other organisational planners to introduce a political or institutional change. The methodological approach suggested by Horn and Weber is a participatory focus group. During this meeting, issues are identified within each of the sectors. These issues are then visualised into images and text format with the intention of providing a comprehensive overview of local issues whilst identifying connections and influences between the issues. The concept is a simplified version of an influence diagram (see Figure 4.2).<sup>36</sup> The visualisation of ideas aids the participants in producing recommendations for change. Stakeholders could share organisational concerns, collectively develop connections between the issues at hand and attempt to

<sup>36</sup> No higher resolution images on 'mess maps' were available

collectively debate resolutions. Horn and Weber (2007) recognise that society is dynamic and constantly evolving, therefore they suggest that the maps created through this process should act solely as a solution to the problem at hand. Whilst this research will not hold a focus group, it will integrate the information provided by the many participants into a comprehensible visual map.

#### 4.7 Limitations

Despite taking precautions to ensure the validity of the data produced in this study, the limitations of this study must be considered. The initial engagement with service users was a time-consuming process. As explored throughout this chapter, the sensitive nature of the interviews combined with a lack of trust towards individuals associated with public institutions (as outlined in Section 2.11.2) resulted in a difficult initial engagement with service users. Though the research managed to engage with 23 service users, some of which had little prior engagement with the service network and are considered ‘socially excluded’ within literature (Pierson, 2002; Balda, 2016). However, the initial interviews were staggered, delaying the possibility of a full set of longitudinal interviews, as planned initially.

The longitudinal element of this research would have benefitted from an extended period of time, to further observe the longer-term developments of the individuals. For those who partook in the follow-up interviews, very little had changed circumstantially. Whilst some cases showed significant insights into some of the key findings of this research (such as James’s story of overcoming addiction through the support of a ‘hidden’ community, as will be introduced in Section 5.7 and Section 7.5) a study over several years could bring more insight into the individuals’ development and the factors that influence a change in the individuals’ circumstances, for better or for worse. Due to the chaotic nature of the lives of the individuals, this may be a difficult task; however, this could be overcome, for instance, through larger participant numbers, higher incentives for participation, or links to organisations which are regularly accessed by the participants (which was a strategy that resulted in the highest call-back rate within this project).

A final limitation is the lack of representation of ethnic minorities within all participant samples. As mentioned in Section 4.4.1, this could be due to the fact that the percentage of ethnic minorities in Dundee only lies at 4% (Scotland Census, 2013,



p.16), which would make an accurate representation within a total sample of 31 participants less than one. However, it is still important to recognise that the findings of this research may not be representative for individuals who experience further intersectional inequalities than represented in this project.

## 4.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to provide evidence for adopting a methodology that aims to overcome some of the issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3. As set out in Chapter 2, poverty is characterised by powerlessness and voicelessness (Narayan, 2000). This research adopts a critical phenomenological approach. This was purposefully chosen to give those who are recognised by the researcher as being oppressed by the system a chance to express their concerns without providing a predetermined framework within which to set their concerns (Rovatti, 1973). Whilst it could be argued that taking a critical approach is providing a predetermined framework, phenomenological research fulfils some of the original aims of critical theory, namely, to emancipate those oppressed by the system. This is further justified as the framework arose from the interviews rather than for the interviews, as the participants' oppression through the system became evident within the first few interviews (see Chapter 5).

Chapter 3 demonstrated that whilst partnerships could provide a useful basis for providing a wider network of services to individuals excluded from institutions (Pierson, 2002), barriers such as power disparities between different types of organisations (Sinclair et al., 2018; Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014) and austerity measures (Geddes, 2011) can have a negative impact on the way services are provided. This would ultimately affect those who rely on services the most: the service users. To understand the multitude of influences on service provision and how this affects service users, this research used multiple approaches to identify varying levels of impacts. Interviewing frontline staff and policymakers helped to identify internal and external impacts on service provision. A Social Network Analysis helps to identify powerful actors and to understand how power relations are enacted within the wider service network. Whilst the application of the SNA may conflict with the phenomenological approach advocated in Section 4.2, the sole purpose of this method is to identify key players within the service network beyond what five members of staff might have recognised.

Overall, the purpose of the methodology as set out in this chapter is to fulfil the research aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of how inequality is impacted through social services and wider support networks. The following chapter (Chapter 5) will discuss the findings from the interviews with service users, which will highlight the inequalities faced by the participants.

## 5 Inequality and poverty

### 5.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to provide a detailed insight to the findings of the first research phase, which consisted of three longitudinal interview phases with 23 different service users. This will answer the first research question, which seeks to identify the root causes for poverty and understand structural barriers which keep the individuals in poverty. Firstly, Section 5.3 will introduce the participants. Rather than solely offering demographic information, as has been done in the methodology chapter (see Section 4.4.1.2), this section will bring the individual stories to life by offering a brief insight to the individuals' current experiences. This will also act as a counterargument to the stigma surrounding individuals in poverty holding individual factors responsible for their economic circumstance (Lister, 2015). Subsequently, the section will delve more deeply into the details of the individuals' backgrounds prior to accessing services. This includes an insight to their upbringing, educational and employment background, and significant life events. These findings tie into literature on inequality and discuss how the life circumstances of the participants fit into the theoretical frameworks of poverty. From the information in this study, it would not be possible to isolate an individual cause or common denominator for the roots of poverty. The natural conclusion of this is that the challenge of combating poverty is a complex process.

Section 5.4 will then look at social networks which individuals found to be significant in their lives. This ranges from close personal networks, such as family and friends, to a wider social engagement in the community. These findings tie into theories of social capital and poverty. This then leads on to recapturing individuals' attitudes towards and trust in institutions and society. This is a relevant aspect to discuss as it can determine the way in which an individual engages with services. It has also been linked to individual economic outcomes. Understanding this could provide a rich insight into how the individuals engage with their world. Section 5.5 will elaborate the ways in which poverty has manifested itself in the lives of the individuals. The participants most commonly referred to issues surrounding housing, such as homelessness and the inadequacy of housing available to them, and financial struggles in paying for everyday necessities. These difficulties were heightened through accessing a

dysfunctional welfare system, which will be discussed in Section 5.6. Finally, the chapter will discuss significant longitudinal developments that emerged from the follow-up interviews in Section 5.7. These findings will offer a novel insight into how circumstantial changes and significant life events can impact individuals and drive their lives into a certain direction. Please also note that quotes have purposefully not been altered from their local dialect as to maintain their rich qualitative properties and may contain grammatical errors or offensive language.

## 5.2 Recapturing the intent of this research phase

Rather than solely “scraping the surface” of the interactions of the service users with their services, these interviews act as an in-depth investigation into the thought processes and life experiences which are the precursor for requiring services. This process is representative of how this chapter was divided into sections. The sections represent themes that occurred most frequently and thus were most relevant to the participants. In contrast to the other research phases, finding evidence of the effectiveness of partnership working was not the main intent of this research phase, but the aim was rather to identify the backgrounds of the individuals which have led them to their current circumstances. This is vital to services, as it can show where intervention would be required beforehand, and also perhaps highlight the importance of trauma-informed services.

This research will offer a description of the individuals’ encounters with the intent of providing a rich insight to the lives and experiences of service users. The discussion has purposefully been designated to a separate discussion (Chapters 6 and 7) from the experiences with services, as this chapter is aimed at providing a very detailed insight to the life events discussed in the interviews. The discussion may not refer to all findings specifically, but rather to the key themes that have emerged from this research phase.

## 5.3 Introducing the participants

### 5.3.1 Who are they?

In addition to the demographics presented in the methodology in Section 4.4.1.2, this section will provide some qualitative information about their personal background in terms of education, employment, and upbringing. This is aimed at providing an insight

into the lives of the individuals prior to accessing services. Whilst the subsequent thematic analysis will provide more insight into the individuals experiences, Table 5.1 aims to provide a brief overview of the individuals lives by the themes which were of highest importance to them.

**Table 5.1** Backgrounds of service user participants

|   | <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Character background</b>   |
|---|------------------------------|------------|---|
| 1 | Abigail                      | 36         | Abigail is a devoted mother of two children with learning disabilities. One of her children also has a physical condition which requires strict medical attention. She struggles communicating with schools, medical institutions, and other services when it comes to her children. She feels misunderstood and undermined, which causes her great despair. Through a social prescribing team, she has found a supportive service which gives her hope of finding adequate support for herself and her children. |
| 2 | Beatrice                     | 57         | Beatrice has a child and grandchildren of her own, but she was also a foster mother for many children when she was a young adult. For many years, she worked as a support worker. Two years prior to the initial interview, she was diagnosed with a physical illness which caused her to go into early retirement.   |
| 3 | Charles                      | 38         | Charles recovered from alcoholism and is now employed in an organisation he volunteered for when unemployed. He is very active in the community and supports others who struggle with issues related to poverty.  |
| 4 | Diana                        | 31         | Diana is a divorced mother of two, who has overcome a long-term opiate addiction. The addiction was the result of an abusive relationship and resulted in her children getting taken into social care. She volunteers in churches and plans to return to education as a means to get her children back.   |
| 5 | Eric                         | 59         | Eric is a man with learning difficulties and physical disabilities who has been unable to work for years. He has close contact with his sister, who supports him with his daily tasks.  |
| 6 | Frank                        | 43         | Frank lives with his brother in Dundee. He was diagnosed with autism as a young boy. He moved to Dundee from a rural town in Scotland for a university course. After his final year, he was enrolled in part-time employment. After being diagnosed with a long-term neurodegenerative  |

|    |         |    |  |
|----|---------|----|--|
|    |         |    | disease, which also led to his mental illness, he quit his employment and became unemployed.   |
| 7  | Gordon  | 48 | Gordon is a man on the road to recovery. He was addicted to heroin for a few years, which resulted in his girlfriend of eight years leaving him and moving out with their young daughter. He transferred to a methadone programme and eventually reduced his dose completely. He now lives independently and is actively seeking employment.   |
| 8  | Harry   | 50 | Harry has an extensive history of working in the catering industry. In the past decade, he was made redundant twice. He keeps his hopes up of finding employment. For this purpose, he has attended several publicly funded training courses, which have helped further his qualifications and improve his employability.  |
| 9  | Isabell | 46 | Isabell has recently been through a very traumatic experience. Her husband, for whom Isabell had been a long-term carer, suffered from a life-threatening illness. Having suffered a bad winter and not being able to afford heating, her husband became very ill and was hospitalised. Shortly after being released, her husband passed, leaving Isabell widowed, depressed, and in great financial difficulty.   |
| 10 | James   | 39 | James is a man who is very active in his community. He struggles with drug addiction, which became increasingly severe when he split with his girlfriend of many years and lost access to his child. He accesses soup kitchens regularly. This social access led him to become engaged in the community and speak out for the rights of individuals living in poverty.   |
| 11 | Karl    | 25 | Karl is a young man who had separated from the mother of his only child. Whilst still having his main residence in Dundee, he stays with his current girlfriend and her daughter outside of Dundee. His welfare was cut when he was visiting his girlfriend, so he did not have the funds to return to Dundee. He is experienced in the catering industry. After having been made redundant from a more long-term job, he found employment with another business. Due to inappropriate conduct by the manager, he was forced to quit. This led to Karl claiming Universal Credit, which caused him financial insecurity. |
| 12 | Lewis   | 18 | Lewis is a young man who has recently moved to Dundee for college to turn his life around. As he has no contact with family, he became homeless during the summer holidays because of no financial support. Initially, his friends from college offered him a place to sleep. However, as he felt he was overstaying his welcome, he sought help from professional accommodation   |

|    |         |    |   |
|----|---------|----|---|
|    |         |    | services. During the time of initial interviews, Lewis was staying in homeless accommodation.   |
| 13 | Michael | 53 | Michael joined the military as a young adult. After having left the military, Michael gathered extensive experience of working both in the medical field and in penitentiary institutions. During his employment, Michael started suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, which became so severe that he was forced to leave his employment to focus on recovery.   |
| 14 | Nicole  | 49 | Nicole is a mother of four children, three of whom stay at home. She left her employment when she had her first child. Being a stay-at-home mother for years did not become an issue until she separated from her husband. With no family support to fall back on, Nicole stated struggling to support her children financially.  |
| 15 | Olivia  | 24 | Olivia is a young mother of three. During her adolescence, she was faced with both an abusive father and boyfriend. She left education to care for her child after falling pregnant as a teenager. Moving together with her boyfriend, she became addicted to heroin. During this time, she had two more children with her partner. Both her abusive partner and her addiction led to her children being taken into social care. She is currently in a bid with a women's support agency to regain access to her children and find a home outside of Dundee to escape from her abusive history. |
| 16 | Penny   | 48 | Penny was once a very successful employee in a high-ranking job. She split from a long-term partner over a decade ago, which resulted in her becoming severely depressed and retiring early. She also took a financial hit from the break-up. As same-sex partnerships were not recognised at the time, she was left with no assets. However, she is now utilising a local community group to boost her skills in the field in which she is seeking employment.   |
| 17 | Quinn   | 19 | Quinn is a young man who stays with and is cared for by his parents. He is unable to work and has left education because of autism, learning difficulties and severe mental illness.  |
| 18 | Rosie   | 29 | Rosie grew up near Dundee and moved here as an adult. Having learning difficulties and mental illness for most of her life, she faced a range of hardships, which led to her becoming homeless a few months prior to the interview. She had only recently been transferred to supported housing.  |

|    |          |     |   |
|----|----------|-----|---|
| 19 | Sam      | 53  | Sam is man who has suffered severe hardships in his childhood, which have had strong repercussions on his adult life. He faced physical and sexual abuse from his father and from teachers at a boarding school.  |
| 20 | Tina     | 44  | Tina moved to Dundee from another UK country to study. Whilst here, she developed severe mental illness, which led to her having to terminate her studies. Without the support of her family, she fell into a bout of extreme poverty and was left to access homeless shelters. With the help of a support group, she has slowly gained the confidence to take part in volunteering activities. |
| 21 | Ugo      | n/a | Ugo has struggled with mental illness for several years. His troubles intensified after being institutionalised (prison and psychiatric hospital).  |
| 22 | Veronica | 24  | Veronica is married with two children. She has struggled with inconsistent employment due to zero-hours contracts and employers withholding full wages. Her support worker, who attended the interviews, was helping Veronica reclaim wages from a job that hadn't paid her in months.  |
| 23 | Warren   | 59  | Warren is a single man who had worked in industrial jobs for most of his life. He was made redundant multiple times and has not been able to find employment since, which he attributes to his age.   |

The main aim of this section is to provide a rich insight into the variety of backgrounds the participants come from. Table 5.1 demonstrates that whilst the participants share certain life experiences, such as experiencing traumatic life events, and being raised in impoverished families and neighbourhoods, they otherwise share very few characteristics. This leads to the question of whether it is possible to identify common experiences that could be targeted and prevented to tackle the onset of or the furtherment of poverty. To explore this question in more detail and to personify the participating individuals in more detail, the following sections will provide an overview of the individuals' background stories.

### 5.3.2 Childhood and upbringing – questioning social mobility

#### 5.3.2.1 Childhood experiences

Social origins can be indicative of an individuals' prospects, as social mobility is still largely restricted within the United Kingdom, despite efforts to counteract this (Brown, 2013). Childhood experiences can help shed a light on whether certain life



experiences in early years are more likely to influence an individual's socioeconomic circumstances in adulthood. Brown's (2013) theory states that the socioeconomic position of the neighbourhood of an individual's upbringing is the strongest factor in determining an individual's future economic prospects. This section will explore participants childhood experiences and the impact this has had throughout their lives.

As detailed in Section 4.3.4, the interviews were consistently initiated with the following enquiry: "Tell me a bit about yourself." In most cases, this led individuals to recall some general information about their upbringing before talking about their current circumstances. Very few participants were willing to share minute details about childhood experiences. In these cases, specifics were not probed, as this was not the main focus of the research. Some felt comfortable enough to share particularly traumatic events which took place during their early years, whilst others only shared general information on their upbringing, family and hometown. The traumatic events that were shared were expressed as having a strong relevance to the individual's current life, though not necessarily in a positive way. Sam, for instance, talked extensively and openly about his childhood experiences. His childhood involved being raised by an abusive alcoholic father, who was violent towards both Sam and his mother, being sent to a boarding school with sexually abusive staff and being molested by a family friend in his adolescence. These were events that had affected his life as an adult, thus he felt these were imperative for the researcher to understand his story. Beatrice and Diana spoke of dysfunctional family lives as children. As these experiences were bases through which the individuals framed their current circumstances, the participants readily shared these traumatic experiences (which will be explored further in Section 5.3.4). Other participants briefly mentioned childhood trauma, such as Olivia who experienced childhood abuse, but clearly demonstrated a discomfort talking about this and did not delve further into detail. Analysis demonstrated that this could be linked to the lack of a wider support network. The ones who were keen to share their trauma generally demonstrated a support network which they had established through services. These networks will be elaborated explicitly in Chapter 7. In contrast to specific childhood events, many more participants shared general information on their childhood and upbringing. The findings on this will be elaborated over the next few sections.

### 5.3.2.2 Hometown and heritage

A key element of how upbringing can influence future economic prospects is geography. The location of individuals' upbringing has shown to be a significant factor in determining an individual's financial prospects in adulthood. Individuals who were raised in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to have low income or be unemployed in future than those who were raised in affluent communities (Brown, 2013; Wacquant, 2008b). Of the 23 participants, 21 were born and raised in Dundee. Many of these participants lived in the same areas they grew up in and feel at home in their neighbourhoods. Veronica describes her relationship to her neighbourhood as follows.

I'm from here, grew up in Dundee. Been here all my life. Had my children. Was living in [name of building], the flats. They got knocked down and I got moved over, across the road. I've got nice neighbours and that. Good area.

Nicole also stayed in the neighbourhood in which she grew up in.

Stayed here a' oor days. Just doon the road. Grew up in this road. This is home.

The participants who stayed in Dundee demonstrated some sense of home and belonging in their neighbourhoods. However, not all participants shared a positive outlook on their community. Many spoke of "troublesome" neighbours, often referring to drug addicts, and feeling threatened or at risk by others, signifying their discomfort and mistrust towards other members of the community. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2016), the areas in which these individuals grew up or stayed in belonged to the most deprived areas locally and nationally, such as Whitfield, Kirkton, St Mary's, Lochee and Linlathen (as mentioned in Section 1.3.3). As not to compromise the anonymity of the participating individuals, the specific neighbourhoods in which the respective individuals live will not be revealed. This finding supports the notion that growing up in a deprived community may have an impact on social and economic opportunities in adulthood. This corresponds with the literature on social mobility in the UK. Social mobility has previously found to be very limited in the UK, to the point where some researchers have referred to a "social stagnation" (Brown, 2013). This was visible throughout this research and will be elaborated in more detail throughout the chapter.

Only two participants were born outside of Scotland. Tina had moved to Scotland from another country in the United Kingdom for educational purposes.

I studied Nursing. I didn't finish my education because I became ill, and since then I've just been trying to put everything back together.

She chose not to move back to her home country when she started suffering from mental illness as she did not believe the services in her country would attend to her needs.

[...] in [my country] in '94, the services were 100 times worse than here, though a lot of people don't seem to get that.

Michael is the only person to have been born outside of the UK. However, his parents are British, he grew up in England and is a British citizen. Both Tina and Michael fell into poverty after being unable to work due to mental illness. Another six had moved to Dundee from other areas in Scotland. Four of these moved for educational purposes, whilst one moved for employment purposes and another to remove himself from an abusive background.

All citizens are from a white British ethnic background, which is representative of the lack of ethnic diversity in Dundee City. This means that the experiences faced by these individuals do not reflect the additional stigma that individuals from another ethnicity or nationality may face. There is some evidence of intersectional stigma, as some participants faced discrimination not only based upon their economic status, but also their sexuality, gender, history of addiction, mental illness or disability. Gordon mentioned that he felt like society and service staff treated him and others suffering from drug addiction as “second-class citizens”. Abigail, Frank, Michael, Sam, Rosie and Tina expressed that they felt that their illnesses or disabilities were not taken seriously by authorities and other citizens, who assumed that they were exaggerating their symptoms in order to achieve a monetary gain. Stigma is not only detrimental to the wellbeing of the individuals experiencing it first-hand, but it has wide-reaching consequences, such as acting as a barrier to social integration and could also actively block the access of necessary benefits (Perese, 2007; Whittle et al., 2017), concepts which will be demonstrated throughout the course of this chapter. On top of stigma,

the participants faced a wide range of traumatic experiences. These will be detailed in the following section.

### 5.3.3 Traumatic events experienced by the participants

All individuals had recalled a traumatic life event that either still had lasting repercussions or had affected their life dramatically in earlier years. Family breakdown, abuse from a family member or other traumatic experiences were listed as triggers for individuals falling into addiction or developing mental illness, which in some cases was named as the main cause for being unable to work. In many cases, of course, it was hard to determine a single causal factor, between family breakdowns, abuse, addiction and so on. Yet in all cases, these events had a devastating impact on individual wellbeing. Without adequate support, these experiences can be so detrimental that they can cause the individual to lose their job, become socially isolated, and fall deeper into addiction or mental illness (Hanson et al., 2002, in: Ljungqvist et al., 2015; Kuhn and Culhane, 1998).

Three participants recalled either being in the process of overcoming alcoholism or a drug addiction or having battled addiction in the past. For Diana, addiction was only one part of her very dire circumstances.

Well when I was 16, I ended up smoking heroin, got hooked on that, fell pregnant. Got methadone in 2001 and was on it for 14 year.

She also suffered from domestic abuse by the father of her children.

The father of my kids, from 16 to 26, there was domestic violence and a' that going on, n'a this... he wasnae willing to face these issues, like go to anger management and that. So I got told to get rid o'him. I did get rid o'him. Got the kids took aff for six months, got 'em back, got a rehab plan made for myself, got rid o'him.

Some participants have had a successful career in the past, such as Warren, who was a specialist within the industrial sector, and Harry, who had worked in the catering industry. The furtherment of their careers was hindered by an unfortunate or traumatic event. The mental repercussions of these events combined with the stresses of being in employment led to either a voluntary termination or an early retirement as suggested by the employers. Penny is one of the participants who was particularly affected emotionally and financially by the breakdown of her career.

I used to be a social worker when I first started. I lost my job and was put on an early retirement for health reasons.

She struggled with the separation from her partner in the early 2000s. Her financial difficulties were intensified by her partnership not being officially recognised, as this was prior to the introduction of civil partnerships or same-sex marriages. This meant that she did not have access to the same financial security, such as a share in assets or shared welfare structures, that only became available to same-sex couples during the implementation of civil partnerships in 2005 and later through the introduction of same-sex marriages in 2013 (Lavelle, 2015). This demonstrates that intersectional stigma can present itself through the unequal access to resources through institutions and public bodies. Whilst the legal rights for couples from the LGBTQ+ community have developed since the introduction of same-sex marriages (Lavelle, 2015), other participants of this study reported facing discrimination based on their illnesses and disabilities. The issues with the introduction to the new welfare scheme for individuals with disabilities furthers this argument and will be discussed later in this chapter (see Section 5.6). The stories listed above demonstrate that the individuals experienced significant traumatic events which hindered their ability to work, whether temporarily or permanently. The next section will discuss how the participants reported engaging in education and employment prior to becoming unemployed.

#### 5.3.4 Education and employment in adult years

##### 5.3.4.1 Overview

Research states that those living in poverty are less likely to attain educational achievements, as economic circumstances can force individuals into having to find early employment (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). However, for those raised in poverty who have attained educational achievements, there is little impact on future economic prospects (Brown, 2013). Most participants of this research had gained at least a high school education. The majority had also been previously employed in a promising career or had been enrolled in higher education. Michael and Penny, for instance, had been employed in medical careers, whilst eight participants had completed or undertaken some higher education. These accomplishments did not act as sufficient safety nets to protect individuals from descending into poverty. This will be explored further throughout the following sections. Quinn was the only participant who had

never been in employment or further education as he had left school at a very young age as a result of his severe learning difficulties and mental illness. Among participants there was a roughly even balance of individuals who were unable to work and those who were searching for employment. Only one individual had been employed during the time of the initial interview, whilst a few others found employment prior to the follow-up interview. This will be discussed further in Section 5.7.2.1.

#### 5.3.4.2 Experiences leading to unemployment

Understanding the life circumstances which drove individuals to unemployment is vital to painting the holistic picture of poverty that this research seeks to provide. Most of the participants in this study were unable to work or were searching for employment. The reasons for these circumstances were incredibly varied. The only commonality shared across participants is that this was not by choice. Participants expressed a deep interest in being able to return to work or education once their circumstances allow it. This section will summarise the factors which individuals identified as being key drivers to their current economic status.

In all cases, the socioeconomic status of the individuals could be attributed to an external event which caused the individual to lose their employment or discontinue education. It should be noted that the individuals, whilst in some cases having a stable income, did not report being very wealthy prior to their unemployment. Most participants had lived their entire lives in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland. Despite having taken steps towards a more financially secure future, such as achieving a successful career or enrolling in higher education, the participants were not able to financially sustain themselves after experiencing traumatic events, such as bereavement or the onset of mental illness (see Section 5.3.4). Individuals suffered traumatic events which caused them to lose their main income, leading to mental and physical changes which rendered them unable to work for a long time, thus keeping them in situations where they rely on benefits. With their sole source of income being lost and no assets or family support to turn to for financial support, which is how individuals from wealthier could perhaps withstand the financial impact of these events (Kohli, 1999; Appleyard and Rowlingson, 2010), they found themselves living in severe poverty, sometimes developing mental illness, health issues or addictions as a result.

Many of the participants had extenuating circumstances which led them to being unemployed, mental illness or disability being the most frequent causes mentioned. Tina talks about the onset of her mental illness during a new position she took on.

The information was meant to be admin assistant, but what happened was I felt stressed and I was forgetting stuff, where I put stuff. I'd been making forms up and creating them for nothing. Then three, four weeks later I couldn't find them. I knew I had saved them, but I didn't know if I'd cleaned stuff out. And it wasn't just the once, it happened quite a bit. And I'd feel really embarrassed.

She stated that she had to eventually leave her position as it was overwhelming to attempt to work whilst she was struggling with her mental health.

It just didn't make sense in the long run. It was just too much, so I had to give it up.

Tina's story demonstrates whilst she desired to partake in work, her illness made her unable to carry out her tasks appropriately and had a significant impact on her wellbeing. The participants can be categorised into two groups: those who are able to work but are struggling to find suitable employment, and those who are too ill to work and are kept in poverty through disability benefits. The only shared characteristics were that the lack of employment was not attributable to individual factors, but to unpreventable events and wider social and economic forces. These findings support McKendrick's (2014) theory, which states that individual factors are not to blame for an individual's circumstances, but rather that social, economic and political factors prevent the individuals from being able to find suitable employment. During the time of the initial interviews, the only person in employment was Charles. Charles had been offered full-time employment in the institution for which he had been volunteering. Whilst he states that his employment was due to "luck", he was recognised by the managers as having the appropriate conduct and qualifications for an opening position.

So just at that point, there was a new insurance broker working at [the institution] and they were being awkward. They wanted this and that, and the next thing and the next thing, and he's wanting to have a health and safety manager working at [the institution]. And they were saying at [the institution], "[Charles] has just updated his qualification. He knows what he's talking about". And it saved [the institution] money as well.

Three others, Diana, Karl and Michael, had found employment in the months after the initial interviews, two of which were directly through involvement with a service they attended. Whilst some of these participants had not partaken in the follow-up interviews, they had informed the researcher of their unavailability due to being in employment. Whether these positions led to stable, long-term employment is unclear, however the participants mentioned being passionate about the organisations for which they ended up working prior to engaging in that position. The next section will focus on the instability of employment participants reported as being an issue throughout much of their adult lives.

#### 5.3.4.3 “Odd jobs” and a “bit of this and that”

A common theme was the instability and inconsistency of employment prior to unemployment. Whether this meant a constant fluctuation between employers or irregular shifts every week, the lack of stability had a lasting impact on their future employability. In some cases, the lack of workplace regulations even directly led to their unemployment. Veronica had a particularly bad experience with employment. She had recently been employed on a zero-hours basis but did not receive pay for the hours she did work.

I never got most of my money or that, my wages. I got half, and I asked them why I never got paid, he said cause I never hit my target. Then I was like, I was told I’m getting this much an hour, but.

She had sought support from a support worker, who was helping her to build a legal case against the employer. The experience led to her becoming unemployed again. Another issue which participants faced in finding employment was that employers were not offering enough hours to make the job worthwhile. Harry, who was employed as a chef for two decades before becoming unemployed, was forced to leave his work in search for more hours, as his previous employer was making cuts.

Worked in kitchens and stuff like that, but they were cutting hours and stuff like that so I was going for maybe something like 35 hours a week working in the kitchens and stuff like that, maybe going down to something like less than 30 hours.

After terminating his employment to search for a job with higher wages, he worked for another company, which worked well for him until his hours were reduced again.



The restaurant worked for 2 or 3 years, then new bosses came in and they says well, we're starting from the start again so we're cutting doon your hoors til so and so. Cannae work for that! Can't afford to work for that kinda money. I mean everybody suffered when the credit crunch kicked in. Everybody suffered. It's no getting much better is it? After 6 years now.

Veronica and Harry's stories are prime examples of the issue with low-paid or unregulated employment. They and other participants demonstrated a frustration with their situations as they were keen to engage in employment, yet the unavailability of stable employment forced them to remain unemployed. Two of the older participants had worked in factories but were made redundant due to factories shutting down and relocating abroad. Warren's case was a prime example of the effect of the deindustrialization of Dundee City (Pacione, 1972). He worked in jute for almost two decades before the factories shut down. He then continued to work in another manufacturing job until it shut down in the mid-2000s. Whilst Dundee now exhibits a more diversified economy (Clark et al., 2016), Warren's case demonstrates that those who were specialised in their trade may still suffer the consequences of the loss of the industrial sector. These stories support the claim made by Carlin (2019), highlighting that individuals from deprived backgrounds face higher disadvantages in their search for employment, emphasizing the need for additional support for those struggling to find employment. The following section will focus on the educational backgrounds as reported by the participants.

#### 5.3.4.4 Education

Whilst findings from a larger study on poverty by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) demonstrated that individuals in poverty are less likely to attain educational achievements, the participants of this study showed a great rate of higher educational attainment. Eight individuals had been enrolled in and completed higher education, either at college or university. Frank decided to enrol in a college course as a young adult.

I moved to Dundee to study. [Before that] I was working – well, I worked in various factories. I got to 25 and I was like, it's a dead-end job. I'll see if I can go to college and see if I can further myself. Then after college I went to uni.

After he completed his university course, he had been diagnosed with a degenerative disease making him unfit to work. This led to him developing severe mental illness, causing his wellbeing to deteriorate further. Eric reported going to college to get a diploma in a job he was interested in, but he was not able to find employment within the sector. Others, such as Charles, Harry, and Veronica, completed specific training and development courses to further their knowledge within a certain sector, but likewise struggled to find employment in which they were able to use their knowledge.

These stories are indicative of the various factors involved in unemployment and contrast the status quo that unemployed individuals are uneducated. Whilst it is possible that these individuals are statistically in the minority, it is important to understand that life choices which are taken to secure financial stability provide no insurance towards preventing poverty for individuals who do not have other measures, such as assets or wealthy family members, to provide a safety cushion. Individuals from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to have these resources available to them (Kohli, 1999; Appleyard and Rowlingson, 2010). Whilst the actual implementation of asset-based welfare has been found to be flawed, it does offer potential to provide safety nets to protect against the financial impacts of the events described in the previous section (see Section 5.3.3) (Searle and Köppe, 2014). The participants who had enrolled in or completed higher education were all relatively young, i.e. in their late thirties or younger, so the chances of accumulating enough assets to provide financial stability were relatively slim. Penny, whose story was mentioned earlier in this chapter, had reached the end of her mortgage payments, meaning that she had housing available to her. Others did not have this luxury and were thrown from a well-paid job into extreme poverty, which had a detrimental impact on their wellbeing, in many cases leading to mental illness. This highlights the need for more immediate support to individuals following a traumatic life event, perhaps taking steps to support preventative measures to protect the individuals from the severe impact of a life-changing situation on psyche and wellbeing. It also demonstrates that strategies which call for increasing education are clearly not a sole solution. Further safety nets, such as supporting individuals with homeownership and savings accounts (Sherraden, 1991), must be put in place to ensure financial stability of individuals who encounter events such as the ones mentioned in Section 5.3.3. Nevertheless, individuals sought to improve their financial situation by seeking for employment opportunities. The

following section will discuss how individuals who were able to work engaged in the search for employment.

#### 5.3.4.5 Job search

A topic that frequently arose was the search for employment. Whilst many of the participants were unable to work, those who were able to work were keenly seeking employment but struggled to find a suitable position. One major issue was that individuals were forced to apply for jobs for which they were not qualified. Karl mentions that he was applying for jobs which required a driver's license.

I want to go and work. It's just that I can't find a job. Uhh, and 90% of the jobs out there are saying "oh you need a driver's license". I can't afford driving lessons cause they're £40 a lesson, ken. It's extortionate.

Harry stated that he struggled to find a suitable position with enough hours.

The actual problem is finding a job though. I'm not taking.... I need something over 30 hours, otherwise it's just not worth my time. I couldn't afford to live for any less. You need 30 hours to claim your tax credits, so you definitely need the 30 hours.

Harry demonstrates an awareness of the social security system and poverty traps, which is likely attributable to his lengthy engagement with welfare through his recurring unemployment. In his case, it would be more economically viable to remain unemployed than partake in low paid work<sup>37</sup>.

These issues resonated throughout the interviews. They demonstrate a lack of accessibility of jobs towards individuals without having to make financial compromises. They also demonstrate that whilst the UK Government (Department for Work and Pensions, 2017a) claims to have supported 26,000 households into employment through the introduction of the benefit cap (see Section 1.3.2), this is by far not an indicator of a strategy's success. Veronica's story of working in an unregulated and unappreciative job, mentioned in Section 5.3.4.3, is not uncommon in the economy of zero-hour contracts, temporary contracts, or other unsustainable employment types. In-work poverty has overtaken out-of-work poverty in recent

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<sup>37</sup> This answer was recorded prior to the introduction of Universal Credit, which may have changed Harry's circumstances, as it places a great focus on assisting individuals into employment and prescribes financial punishments for individuals who do not apply for available positions (Kennedy and Keen, 2016)

years, negating any successes claimed by the Government over a rise in employment (McBride, Smith and Mbala, 2018). These interviews show that individuals are willing to work, but in many cases working would have rendered them less well off than staying on unemployment benefits. Universal Credit was created to counter this (Kennedy and Keen, 2016). However, reports of “work experience placements”, which require the individuals to carry out unpaid, full-time work to receive their unemployment benefits (Daguerre and Etherington, 2014), as well as the existence of in-work poverty raise the question of whether these types of employment actually increase poverty rather than reducing it. This will be discussed further in Section 5.6.1.2. The following section will discuss the social networks individuals were a part of prior to accessing services.

## 5.4 Social networks

### 5.4.1 Overview

Having a strong social network is widely regarded as being an essential to wellbeing. Social capital theories highlight the importance of relationships to one another to a range of benefits. Relationships to family and close friends are seen as necessary to improve wellbeing (Putnam, 1995, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Wider networks, such as to neighbours and co-workers, are beneficial to a strong community, as they enable individuals to share resources from one another (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Individuals from working class backgrounds have previously been found to be lacking in these wider networks (Hall, 1999). In this study, it was found that prior to service engagement, social exclusion, meaning a lack of wider social networks and connections to wider establishments, was prevalent. Originally, it was thought that this section would include a section on “community engagement”, as this was a frequently recurring theme in the interviews. However, as this was a common result of accessing services, this will now be discussed in the following two chapters on services.

The stories highlighted in Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4.2 demonstrate that traumatic events had a significant impact on the individuals’ wellbeing. Individual wellbeing is particularly at risk without a stable social network (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Many of the participants reported being very isolated during the particularly vulnerable times, rendering them extremely vulnerable to falling into a cycle of abuse and addiction and struggling to make steps which could have aided their recovery. It

is important to mention that this does not hold the individuals accountable for their own recovery, however they were less likely to take steps independently to overcome these issues. This is not to say that the individuals did not demonstrate agency when accessing support from services, as the individuals in some cases established access to services themselves. However, the support of social networks countered the effects of isolation by contributing to their mental wellbeing, allowing the individuals to take additional steps to recovering from the stresses of living in poverty (see Chapter 7 for further details). Whilst the individuals did not necessarily have social networks to support them financially, social networks were indeed apparent and useful to the participants. The following section will detail the importance of social networks to the participants.

#### 5.4.2 Family and friends – The relevance of bonding capital

Bonding capital refers to close relationships between friends and family, or members of a social network who share characteristics and values and is a valuable factor in maintaining levels of health, wellbeing and perceived security (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Many individuals shared stories about their families, such as spouses/partners and children, and framed them as being of vital importance in their lives, even if they were not necessarily present at the time due to children being removed from care or families being separated. The stories were mainly positive, yet some individuals recalled stories of abuse or family breakdown (see Section 5.3.3). This section will focus on how participants framed the importance of the existence or lack of relationships classified as ‘bonding capital’.

Families have been mentioned as sources of great support to the individuals, both financially and in other supportive ways. For instance, when Frank developed mental illness after being diagnosed with a neurogenerative disease, his brother moved in with him to offer him mental support.

He moved in to help me after a suicidal reaction to my medication in 2005.

Frank is very thankful for the support he gets from his brother. As his brother is likewise unemployed, they can support each other on a meaningful level.

He's unemployed as well. Unlike me, he's had a lot of hassle with Atos<sup>38</sup>. It just seems like a revolving door, getting your money cut, then having to appeal, and then it happens again. Over and over again. He's had a really tough time.

Like Frank, Eric has a sister who will help him with everyday tasks as he struggles to do so himself.

She'll go out and get my benefit, get anythin I need. Food and leccy and anythin like that. Fae Aberdeen.

She travels with her partner to Dundee from Aberdeen. Eric is very thankful for his sister's support.

She's really helpful. We're friends. Went out for a curry and got macaroni and cheese. Well, I've got food in the hoose anyway. I need it, but my sister came 'round on Wednesday and did my washing for us.

These two cases demonstrate how important close relationships can be to the wellbeing of the individual receiving support. The gestures carried out by the family members in question prevent the individuals from having to access services for actions which the individual would not be able to carry out themselves. This theme was common amongst participants, who recalled a high level of reliance on family members for tasks they could not carry out themselves for physical, psychological, or financial reasons. These individuals recalled a higher level of overall wellbeing during the initial interviews than those who did not have this support, who were more likely to report they were 'struggling getting by'. Karl told his story of receiving support from a close friend, albeit rather reluctantly accepting it.

[when my girlfriend and I] broke up, I came home and I was staying on my pal's couch who has a wife and two kids, so I can't really be taking up his house.

This occurred before he admitted himself to a homeless unit, as a result of feeling he overstayed his welcome.

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<sup>38</sup> Atos Healthcare is a private health care company which was employed by the DWP to carry out fit-to-work assessments. They were banned from doing so in Scotland in 2017, after a report demonstrated that 2380 people died from being wrongly declared fit-for-work from 2011 to 2014 (McIntyre, 2017).

I've got a few family members, but my mum's doing part-time work and single, my brother and sister are unemployed, my dad's disabled, eh, so not really, no. Nobody really responsible for me. Don't know where else to turn when there's no money.

Karl's story shows that the reason for this may well be that family members are struggling to make ends meet themselves, let alone trying to support another family member. Some participants attributed the severity of their financial situation to the lack of support available from family. For instance, Nicole, who recently went through a divorce, reported that her wider family had "all passed". She stated that she was forced to access financial advice services and emergency financial support, such as crisis loans and food banks.

If it wasn't for [the services] you wouldnae ken what tae dae. Cause I've no got any family left ken. My family is a passed. Wha could ya possibly go to with nae family, ken.

This demonstrates that having the support from immediate family or friends would be preferable, but without the availability of these relationships, the individuals relied on services for support through financial hardships. However, having these immediate bonds meant more than having a financial back-up. For Frank and Eric, having the close relationships to other family members provided them with a feeling of comfort, supporting theories which state that bonding capital is vital for individual wellbeing (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Even when relationships did not immediately contribute to an increase in wellbeing, having close bonds was important to framing their existence and establishing a sense of purpose. Diana and Olivia, who had lost custody over their children and were taking steps to reconnect to them. Tina had reported visiting and bringing gifts to a close friend in hospital, whose mental health had deteriorated so severely that she was not able to interact with her on a meaningful level. These examples are indicative for relationships being more than reciprocity or a method of personal gain (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). In some cases, humans give without receiving, demonstrating that human connection is much more complex than social capital theory suggests. This will be expanded on in Chapter 7. Social capital is not only evidenced by the relationship between family members, but also extends to how participants relate to their wider community. The following section will look at how the participants related to other individuals in their community and society as a whole.

### 5.4.3 Outlook on society and trust

#### 5.4.3.1 Overview

This study did not actively seek to uncover how participants related to and perceived society. However, the interviews naturally led the individuals to share their thoughts on occurring themes. Participants shared social commentary on a wide range of subjects. This included their opinions of other citizens, as well as their opinion on specific institutions. The three most prominent themes which invited the individuals to reflect upon were the following:

- individuals living in poverty,
- the city of Dundee as a whole (citizens, the city's socioeconomic situation, and local institutions),
- and lastly, the national government and associate organisations, such as the DWP.

On a theoretical level, trust is linked to social capital, as without trust to other individuals, support networks cannot be formed (Agger and Jensen, 2015). The following sections will discuss the thoughts that participants shared with the researcher on this.

#### 5.4.3.2 Attitudes towards people living in poverty

Social trust, meaning an individual's trust towards others in society, has been previously found to be correlated with economic status, trust in institutions, and the amount of positive relationships with others (Agger and Jensen, 2015; Powell, Thurston and Bloyce, 2017; Algan and Cahuc, 2010). Therefore, it can be indicative of an individual's position in society. This is one of the themes that came up naturally in conversation with the participants. Whilst the term 'social trust' was not mentioned as such, many participants shared their views on other citizens. Participants were particularly keen to share their opinions on other individuals living in poverty. Thirteen participants felt strongly about those in dire circumstances. The attitudes were split almost evenly between those who felt empathy and those who had negative attitudes towards others in poverty.



Six participants detailed their feelings of empathy towards those in poverty. Charles shared his view by telling a story seeing others in situations of deep despair whilst volunteering at a foodbank.

I volunteer at a foodbank. And the amount of people that come in because, either they've got their money cut being sanctioned or the government are being - I wanna be polite here – doing their budget cuts, emmm, it's really affecting the mental health of some people and kids as well. We've had people coming into the foodbank crying, and I can't... I hope I'm not breaking confidentiality here. If they can't afford to pay single people, fund families. They should provide families with heating if they need it. They should provide funding for food for families, because that's gonna have an effect on a child.

Another five individuals felt otherwise about those in poverty. The feelings of negativity either resulted from feeling that others received undeserving attention or help or feeling resentment for those who ask for help.

You'll probably have been in these places yersell before, and some o' them, ehhhh, there is a few people that take the mickey of it, ken what I mean? There is certain people, you see them in there [...] and a couple o' weeks later they're back. [...] There's only so many times they can help, and they're trying to take the mick of it. And that annoys me. They're no struggling. Half of them are on that DLA and everything. They're on more money than ehm on. And yet they're trying to take the mick. It really annoys me, that.

The consensus amongst those who felt negatively towards others in poverty was that others were taking advantage of the system and were undeserving towards the support that they were given, whilst the participants felt that they themselves had fulfilled the requirements as set by the state.

Feelings of negativity were particularly strong for drug addicts, even when the participant had experienced drug addiction themselves. Gordon, who had himself recovered from a heroin addiction, felt sympathy towards those struggling with addiction, but disapproved of some of their actions.

It's about the education of where you start and where you finish. It's discipline. Those people are on that for life. It's ridiculous. That's how you walk through the town and all you hear is someone asking for a penny from somebody's hard work. They're

begging on the streets and a. Most people are on methadone to be doing that. They're not thinking forward. They're not thinking for themselves. I've got a chemist to go to first. They're giving people this stuff... and adults are wearing nappies and they're nice people as well from nice families [voice breaks].

Karl mentioned feeling let down by others as a reason for wanting to participate in the study and getting his story out there.

Everyone that's been supposed to help me has fucked me over. This is why I'm agreeing to help you as much as you're needing because I've had enough.

In conclusion, the participants demonstrated very mixed views on other citizens in poverty. Some had empathy through their experience, whereas others displayed feelings of anger and mistrust towards them, as they felt they were asking for something they were not entitled to. The reason this is relevant to understand is that trust in other citizens has previously been found to be indicative of the individuals' trust in institutions. This in turn can then impact whether anti-poverty strategies are likely to be successful (Powell, Thurston and Bloyce, 2017). The following section will look at the attitudes towards public institutions as mentioned by the participants to see whether any feelings of mistrust were carried on to them.

#### 5.4.3.3 Institutional trust

##### *5.4.3.3.1 Attitudes towards government and public institutions*

The following section will entail some of the attitudes that individuals have towards public bodies, giving empirical evidence to the concept of institutional trust. The reason this is relevant towards this study is that knowing how individuals feel towards these integral parts of society has previously been found to be indicative of the individuals' stance towards wider society. It can also be indicative of how likely an individual is to accept support from a public institution (Agger and Jensen, 2015). In this study, most participants displayed a certain amount of mistrust towards institutions. For instance, Ugo talks about how he views the news as propaganda.

The news are the worst. I felt bad for a while. Every once in a while, I would turn the news on, but it's just utterly depressing [laughs], so I'm not watching it anymore. It's just sheer propaganda at the best of times. So much shock factor that they try to shock you into being politically active, but I just turn on my Playstation and forget about it.

Particularly the individuals struggling with mental illness had developed a strong degree of mistrust towards employees of the NHS. This was often attributed to negative experiences with staff, sometimes even encountering stigma. Quinn, who has had regular contact with mental health and support workers since he was a young teenager, spoke of how he had felt unsupported by his Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN).

My CPN discharged us because he said I was pretty stable. I think they're just making cuts to be honest with ya. Doesn't really bother me though to be honest. Each time I had a problem he was never really seeing it from my side, just from the other person's side.

The way Quinn states that he feels as though “they’re just making cuts” shows that he believes the system does not have his best interest at heart and prioritise finances over adequate support. This is significant as whilst he does not directly state that this had driven him to seek support in a more relaxed setting with a group of peers, it becomes clear throughout the interview that there is a strong dichotomy between the way he feels towards his nurses and the way he feels about the organisation he has attended so enthusiastically for many years (discussed in Section 7.4).

Gordon talks about how he feels like the system is rigged against drug addicts.

They're not telling people what you're letting yourself in for. Especially in the drug scene. If your drug habit gets out of sync, they're putting you on methadone. That could just be someone taking painkillers from the doctor that gets put on methadone. You're highly unlikely to come off that stuff. Most people, they'll want to have kids, they want a job. You will get treated like a second-class citizen. I've went through it. They'll differentiate you from the family. It's shame for people on methadone. They're just so sedated. It's just not seen in the right light.

His viewpoint demonstrates a clear feeling of mistrust towards the system. He feels as though the methadone programme is just a method of giving heroin addicts a new addiction, without adequate support to combat the dependency from substances entirely. Thus, he questions whether the healthcare system has his best interests at heart and even clearly states that he feels like he is treated as a “second-class citizen”.

These examples were only a few examples of the participants expressing that they did not feel as though institutions had their best interests at heart. The following section

will look at attitudes towards the DWP and affiliated services in particular, which were a large theme amongst the participants.

#### *5.4.3.3.2 Attitudes towards the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre and affiliated services*

This category encapsulates all services which are directly related to the process of applying for and receiving welfare. It does not refer to welfare support or financial advice, which will be discussed later on in the chapter (see Section 5.6). The term 'affiliated services' refers to agencies which provide employment support or training programmes (e.g. Triage) and work in direct cooperation with the DWP or Job Centre services. The topic occurred naturally as a result of discussing welfare and its impacts. Individuals felt unfairly treated and not respected, which led them feeling powerless over their own situations, exhibiting the powerlessness in poverty as characterised by Narayan (2000). This inevitably led to the individuals developing an antagonistic attitude towards members of the organisations, which will be detailed throughout this section.

James expressed concerns for his friend over his treatment by the employment training contractor for the DWP, Triage.

One of my pals, he was sanctioned for three years. He took Triage to court and he won his appeal, but he still got sanctioned. Even after being in the court and winning the appeal in the actual court. He's still got sanctioned, ken? He says to him, "look, we've offered you a job, and you didn't take it, so that's how you still got sanctioned". He says, "I'm no capable of working". He says, "well you're still getting sanctioned." He says, "ken what? You can keep the money cause ehm not capable". Basically, that's what they're going to him. They're killing him slowly. He's nae electric. Eats in the soup kitchens all the time. He's older than me, ken?

As the experience of accessing welfare was mainly described as a strenuous and worrying event, it comes as no surprise that the attitudes towards the workers from these institutions are negative.

However, one participant found the negative attitudes of others towards Job Centre staff unfounded. Harry believed that the staff were essentially good people and those that have negative encounters with the staff have not fulfilled the expected tasks.

Aye got on fine wi' 'em. Get on fine with most of 'em. So, we should. If you prove you're looking for work, you dinnae get any bather. You get these people saying, "Oh, I got sanctioned". When was the last time you actually looked on universal job seekers?

The research by Allum et al. (2010) concludes that socioeconomic status is somehow linked to trusting institutions and joining organisations. The reality is much more complex. It is unclear whether the mistrust expressed in these interviews has been present in their entire lives, but it is clear that the mistrust is not unfounded. The individuals feel betrayed by organisations they are completely dependent on during a very vulnerable period in their lives. They feel like they are not respected as individuals, thus creating a feeling of resentment and mistrust towards those who have treated them as such. It is not a coincidence that individuals of a low socioeconomic position have low levels of institutional trust, but rather it is a result of a long-term, unequal relationship which makes the individual feel like the institutions do not have their best interest at heart.

## 5.5 Manifestations of poverty

### 5.5.1 Housing and homelessness

Despite only two individuals being considered homeless at the time of the interview, eighteen participants had been homeless at some point in their lives. This is a significant finding, particularly as many of the individuals were not always openly homeless to the authorities. 'Couchsurfing' at the homes of friends and family was a common theme amongst the participants. Many of the participants had to utilise the support of those close to them as a means to have shelter. The causes for homelessness varied. Karl, for instance, lived in a house which was unsuitable to live in and was left on the streets after a family breakdown.

[My previous flat] was damp and all that, had problems with the landlord and the council. Cause I was trying to get help to get rid of the damp and the landlord got in trouble from the Council cause the flat was all damp, there was no double glazing in the windows and no heating. I ended up moving out with my son's mum and into her house in Arbroath. Then we broke up and I came home, and I was staying on my pal's couch who has a wife and two kids, so I can't really be taking up his house. So, I ended

up having to go into [a homeless shelter]. I stayed there for a few months, and that was alright. It was better than the streets, I guess.

Karl's story of not wanting to impose on his friends by seeking their support was mentioned by several young male participants. Lewis, who had also 'couchsurf' prior to attending a homeless shelter, described that even though his friend offered him a place to stay, he felt uncomfortable staying there longer than necessary and sought support from a homelessness organisation as soon as possible.

Whilst homelessness expectedly had negative effect on the individuals' wellbeing, especially during the time of actual homelessness, Rosie talks about how it ended up having a positive effect on her life in the long run.

[...] the way things ended up I ended up in a homeless unit. I'm in touch with my family now. I didn't think I was good enough for them for a couple years, so I'm now back in touch with my family, so... yeah... It was the best thing that ever happened because I got put into supported housing, then I got transferred into a council flat. So, it was the best thing that ever happened.

Referring back to the typologies of homelessness as created by Kuhn and Culhane (1998), the participants of these study who reported to be homeless can all be classified as transitionally homeless. No one reported being homeless more than once. This is a relatively positive finding. Despite individuals reporting having a history of chaotic lives, such as dealing with the effects of addiction and abuse, many were able to maintain the housing stability after a single episode of homelessness<sup>39</sup>. Whether this is attributable to individual choices or support through services is unclear, but it can be viewed as positive that the individuals were not repeatedly homeless. This does not negate any financial troubles experienced by the participants. The following section will detail participant reports on their financial situation.

### 5.5.2 Finances

The most obvious manifestation of poverty is the lack of financial resources. The lack of financial income affects the ability to pay for essential items, such as food, housing,

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<sup>39</sup> It is important to consider the fact that it is likely because the individuals have maintained housing and have some stability that allowed them to participate in this research.

and utility bills. This section will look at some of the most commonly mentioned issues individuals reported as a result of having financial issues.

Frank stated that sometimes he struggles to ‘top up the meter’. On being asked on what he would do in that situation he responded as follows.

Well you’ve got to make a decision whether to heat or eat. I prefer to be warm and go hungry than the other way around.

After an issue with accessing a new type of welfare, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter (see Section 5.6), Karl spoke of struggles to pay his rent and utility bills. He was also at the time of the interview staying with his girlfriend in another Scottish city, as he did not have the funds to return to Dundee.

My house ran out of electric. I lost all my food. My house was left basically empty for a few weeks. I had to stay with my girlfriend. She was having to help me out with her money, which she can’t afford to do. It caused problems and that in the relationship. It got to the point where I went to my doctor’s and I got signed off with anxiety and that was when my Universal Credit started to work properly, and I received payments. [...] Now I got rent arrears, I’ve got council tax arrears, I’m also having to pay back an amount of £40 a month initially until I’ve agreed a private payment plan with the council, so now it’s only £60 coming off my benefit. I’m basically left with £193 to live off on a five-week basis. And that’s impossible.

Karl’s story is rather common amongst the participants. Not only the effects of the late payment by Universal Credit, which will be discussed in the next section (5.6), but the “roll-on” effect of one missed payment affecting individuals for months.

Isabell lives in public housing, where she used to stay with her family.

We’ve got 3 empty rooms in a huge big massive house, where a family’s probably stuck in a small apartment that could use this. It’s far too big to keep warm and keep the electric in it, keep food in it. The meter is just a nightmare.

She had applied to relocate to a smaller apartment 2 years before the initial interview and stated that she was still waiting on a transfer. The house was causing her a great amount of financial distress.

I put in for a crisis loan last week, ‘cause I had a pound in my gas and 30p in my electric and I got refused on that, cause I didn’t meet the criteria needs.

Individuals struggled to cope with the effects of having little to no income. Karl articulates the effects of having no money on the ability to buy necessities.

Obviously, there's no means and ways to get to food at all if you don't have money. Everything's just for money now. Not as if you can just go work for food or a meal, ken. I've worked all my days, apart from when - I think since I left school when I was 16 I've taken one year off and that was for my son.

Financial coping mechanisms varied between participants, with some participants mentioning individual strategies and others reporting the support of services through crisis grants or support with utilities. Gordon mentioned immediately paying for his food and electricity meter when he got paid, to assure that at least his necessities were covered. Lewis mentioned shopping at discount supermarkets to reduce his expenditures on food. The participants did anything they could to get by on the minimal income available to them, which was usually provided by welfare. The following section will detail the participants' experiences with accessing welfare.

## 5.6 Welfare

### 5.6.1 Experiences of accessing welfare

Understanding how and why individuals access welfare was a key part of this study. It helps to identify the specific financial needs of the participants. Welfare is also considered to be a marker of modern society. As welfare has been developed to support the most vulnerable in our society, understanding its implementation can be a tool for understanding a nation's stance towards its citizens (Cousins, 2005). Over the course of this study, a range of welfare reforms had taken place. Most notably, the change from a range of previous welfare schemes to Universal Credit, and the change from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) had taken place.

Whilst for some individuals, being a welfare recipient was inevitable due to their inability to work, other individuals particularly struggled with not being able to find a job. Penny, who was once a successful medical worker, found the process of attempting to come off benefits 'life-consuming'.



It's life-consuming trying to get off these benefits. It's like they never leave you, the thoughts are always there. You're constantly aware of it. Surrounded by it, controlled by it.

Penny encapsulates the fear that is caused by the uncertainty of welfare recipients' future finances under the new welfare system. Veronica also talked about the impact the impending welfare reforms had on her mental health.

Every time I hear it my brain just switches off because I am so scared. I'm barely getting by just now. When it happens, I'll deal with it but I can't deal with it just now. I got called to see the woman at the job centre and at that point my plan was to throw myself off of the bridge when I came out. I had it all organised. If anything else was said, this was where we were going next. Luckily, she was a very nice woman and nothing happened, but I need to be careful a bit. I just need to watch out.

These quotes demonstrate some of the negative associations individuals have with the welfare system, and the considerable impact this can have on their wellbeing.

A common issue was also a misunderstanding of regulations that the individuals were bound to, which individuals attributed to being given misinformation or conflicting advice by members of HMRC staff. This was especially common in relation to the welfare reforms, as individuals were unaware of any upcoming changes. However, Sam told his story of losing years of savings due to a communication error.

I was always taught as a young child that it's good to save money. It's good to save for a rainy day, in case you're in trouble or in need. I didn't really drink, so I used to save the money instead of drinking or taking drugs, 'cause I thought I could then go on holiday. But what happened is what I never knew that you're only allowed to save so much on the social. Because I had saved a large amount of money, the social then pulled me in and interrogated me. They said, "We understand you've had an ISA". [...] I got a letter from them saying that they wanted me to come in because they want to review my benefits so I was getting the right amount of money [...] I went into the interview at the job centre and then they took me way, way back into a private room. I thought this was a bit odd. The guy says, "right, we want to know how much money you've got and how much you've got on the ISA". [...] I was getting all nervous and frightened. I didn't know what was going on. He says, "if you're not honest with us we'll have to call the police in". [...] I thought I was gonna go to jail. They weren't honest with me. Lied to me to get me in the office. Then they cut me off. The boy said

that won't happen. They obviously didn't know. This is the funny thing; we came upon an agreement. They made me pay back over 7 years of rent. I had to pay back a whole 7 years of all the DLA I got, which I don't think that's right. [...] The thing was I said to them, because I was on DLA, I was given misinformation. A woman told me on the phone that you can save up as much DLA as I like, and it wouldn't be affected. [...] The first thing I said to one of them was, "if I had blown it all on drinks or drugs, I wouldn't have been affected?" He said, "yeah you wouldn't have been affected." [...]. It really hurt. If I'd known that, I would've spent it.

This story highlights the power disparity within this situation. It also highlights flaws within the system that bar individuals from taking steps to secure financial stability. Sam was kept in poverty after years of creating savings, which were aimed at providing a safety net. This demonstrates the powerlessness faced by the individuals. Sam thought he was acting in his best interest and was not aware that he was acting unlawfully, again demonstrating a lack of power over his situation. The following section will detail the experiences that may have led to these types of thoughts.

#### 5.6.2 Universal Credit and JSA

Universal Credit is a replacement scheme for a wide range of previous benefits schemes, such as Jobseeker's Allowance, housing benefit and tax credits. Universal Credit is a scheme that was intended to be introduced in Dundee in 2015 (UK Government, 2015). Despite this, the transfer of previous welfare recipients to the new scheme had not yet occurred by the time of the first interviews in 2016/2017. Many others anticipated the impending change from Jobseeker's Allowance to Universal Credit, yet only one participant had in fact been in receipt of Universal Credit. This was due to the fact that most individuals had already been claiming benefits for a long period of time. Even during later research stages in 2017, most participants had not yet experienced the transition to Universal Credit from their previous welfare schemes. In this study, Karl was the only participant to have received Universal Credit immediately. He describes the experience of accessing the new scheme as unclear.

I got signed onto the Universal Credit, and I got told that I had to wait five weeks for them to sort it all out. So, five weeks came and went [...] and essentially they left me without any money at all. Must've been about eight weeks, if not longer, and then they told me that there was this thing called an advanced payment or something, which essentially I took was that they would give me my money early and then I wouldn't

get my payment when I was due a payment, but it wasn't, it was a loan. I know I have to pay back £40 a month off of my benefit and, eh...

The confusion caused by the initial application process has resulted in Karl being severely in debt. When his first payment came in, he used the money to pay off the debt that he had accrued.

So, now I'm paying back £40 a month just for the Universal Credit advance payment that only lasted me a week. I still had another Christ knows how long until I first got money again. And I think it was until May, the 20th of May [2016], when I received my first payment. And by that time, I'd already been into the job centre and sorted out my rent, that it was be paid directly to the council and I wouldn't receive that at all. It would just be my living expenses that were paid in. So, they paid money into my account anyway, and that's me thinking, "that's my first payment, or my backdated payment". I then proceeded to use that to pay off all the debt that I gathered in the coming months that I hadn't used. I could only afford to pay off so much of it, ken?

His story with Universal Credit continues with a sanction.

I got sanctioned because I had an appointment, and I got ADD, so I take medicine that helps me focus. And I was ill. I wasn't able to take my tablets. I wasn't able to go to my appointment one day. I phoned them a few days later and told them about it. I got an appointment rearranged and I sorted everything out. So, they decided that they would sanction me for 26 days. I get – my daily allowance is £8.30 basically. That's what I get to live off of a day. They decided they were gonna take that money off of me daily for 26 days. They essentially left me with 10p a day for 26 days. And when I appealed this because it was obviously medical and I couldn't get to them, they, uh – I phoned them up and says I'm no happy with the sanction mate, and the guy turns round and says that because he had the power, he didn't think that I gave a good enough reason and he wasn't gonna pay it. And that was it. Lost my access.

Karl's story shows that the way the system around Universal Credit works worsened his financial situation by putting him into debt and severe poverty, leaving him in a financial situation that is not sufficient to survive on. Whilst this is only one participant of this study, previous research has also demonstrated that sanctions further contribute to increasing severe poverty (Beatty et al., 2015; Beatty and Fothergill, 2018). Conditionality of welfare furthers the divide between those deemed worthy and unworthy of an acceptable standard of living by institutions (Wacquant, 2009). Karl's

story also contributes to the evidence base which demonstrate that conditional welfare systems drive welfare recipients further into poverty (Morazes and Pintak, 2007). Warren also told his story of being sanctioned from his JSA because he did not apply for a job that required a driving license, despite not having one.

So this job came up one year ago, a job match, forklift driver. So what could land you in trouble? Just one word. I never applied for it. I didn't even type in how I'd even apply for it. Why? Because the job specifically stated that you needed a driving license, which I don't have. So I go in, and the guy that signs me on, my advisor, he never even looked at my profile to see if I had a driving license. He just said, you're getting sanctioned. I said I couldn't apply for it; I've not got a license. It's like a catch

22.

Whilst not being affected by Universal Credit, Warren's story raises the question of whether sanctions are conducted on a reasonable basis. Both of these stories raise concerns about the way that sanctions work. Individuals are being punished for human error without malicious intent, leaving them to struggle without income for a period of time, only further increasing the inequalities the individuals face towards accessing an acceptable income and an acceptable standard in living. The following section will focus on training assigned by the DWP, which was allegedly aimed at supporting individuals into employment.

### 5.6.3 Triage and work-related interviews

For individuals previously on Jobseeker's Allowance, some adjustments to the previous scheme have had a large impact. Individuals were now expected to attend work training through a company called Triage, which was contracted by the DWP to carry out employment training and assign work placements for individuals. They and other contractors to the DWP faced heavy criticism as claimants were assigned to do unpaid and punitive work, only receiving their JSA or Universal Credit as a monthly income. On top of this, the placements rarely offer the individuals any real opportunity, as only 5% of employers have ever recruited individuals from the Work Programme (Carter and Whitworth, 2017, p.808).

James speaks of his experience with the company and how he feels like he was purposefully fed misinformation by staff.

In last September I got a phone call from Triage. They says I'd need to come in, but due to unforeseen circumstances the appointment was unfit. She says, "yeah that's fine, you don't need to come in now". I took somebody in wi' us the fortnight after. On the Monday my friends [...], they were listening. It was that bad, ken. The first thing the lassie says was, "[...], you missed an appointment on the 6<sup>th</sup>." I says, "No, I got a phone call saying I wouldn't need to come in due to unforeseen circumstances." She says, "No I never phoned you". I started greeting, 'cause I ken she's lying to us. What am I gonna do? My pal came across and he says, "You phoned on the Friday for the appointment on Monday". [My support worker] was there so she heard it. She's typing up and everything ken. She picked up the phone and says to someone if they could cancel the sanction. Cancelled it right there and then. And she still denies it to this day that it was her.

James's story reflects the reports of the whistle-blower who reported that workers were making false claims to claimants to reach their sanction target (Cowburn, 2015). Other individuals also reported negative experiences with their work assessments and placements. Individuals are demonstrating a willingness to fulfil the commitments set out to them by the DWP, yet they face barriers to adequately fulfilling them and are consequently barred from accessing their benefits. This actively undermines the rights of the participants. T. H. Marshall's (1949) theory on citizenship states that all citizens should have equal right to welfare, yet the current reforms follow an individualistic neoliberal agenda, blaming individuals for errors they have no way of rectifying. A further change in welfare which has been undermining universal rights to accessing welfare is the change to the new benefit system for individuals requiring financial support for disabilities or long-term illnesses, i.e. the change from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). This will be elaborated in the following section.

#### 5.6.4 PIP assessments

Of the seventeen individuals who had experienced a recent change in welfare, the most commonly experienced change was the transfer from DLA to PIP. Both benefit structures are directed towards individuals who are unable to work as a result of disability (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019). The intention of the transition was allegedly to provide individuals with a level of income better suited to their particular illness or disability, as well as to eliminate any fraudulent benefit claims. In

this study, those with mental illness have been found to suffer most strongly as a result of this change.

Two participants showed the researcher letters they had received from the DWP. These documents informed the participants that representatives who were named as “health care professionals” were to carry out a structured assessment interview based on a set of questions provided by the DWP. Participants reported not being able to fully explain their condition to the assessors, neither in the form nor the interview, despite trying to elaborate the reasons they could not work to the interviewers. This resulted in the participants being declared fit-for-work, despite having letters from their GPs stating the contrary. Ugo recalls his experience of being told by a support worker not to wash for a few days prior to the assessment, as a lack of personal hygiene was likely to be more successful in convincing the assessor of their inability to work than their medical record.

I was awarded no points for my mental health despite spending years in hospital being on medication and still struggling heavily. [...] They gave me points for looking slovenly and my personal hygiene. I dressed in my worst clothes and didn't shave for a week. I knew that was the only way I'd get my benefits. That was the only reason I got any points for PIP. I didn't want to appeal. The fact I got anything was.... I heard of people appealing then losing what they'd been granted originally as well. I couldn't see any connections to the mental health, even after the interview itself when I was attempting to speak about how my mental health was affecting me. It was made quite clear that they were only interested in physical things from the form.

Ugo describes the issues with the rigidity of the document, which does not allow for elaboration of the individual circumstances. Rosie told a very similar story, in which she was advised not to change her clothes for a few days prior to the interview, as her support workers worried that the assessment would not take her mental illness into consideration.

Eric, who suffers from a disability, was one of the first to claim PIP. He described his encounter of receiving PIP in 2015 as follows:

I got a lump sum in June. Basically got paid until the end of June [2014], and then they said they'd pay me on a monthly basis up until the 22nd of July [2015]. And then I had to like... accept their offer. Well that was the proper amount I was supposed to

have from October last year until June this year, which was £3600 and then because I didn't go to the court's tribunal they said if we've got evidence, we'll continue it. But to continue it I had to make a completely new claim.

Whilst the daunting application process caused Eric some trouble, the actual payment of PIP itself assisted in the payment of specialised equipment he required. He was not able to afford this when he was receiving DLA and did not get funding through the NHS.

What helped was the PIP last year and this year, helped to pay for [the equipment] which I need.

Eric suffered from visible physical disabilities, but those who suffered from less visible ailments in the form of mental illness, found the PIP assessment a very distressing and demeaning encounter.

The transition from DLA to PIP has left highly vulnerable individuals in times of despair. Particularly the individuals suffering from mental illness struggled with the stress caused by the transition. As mentioned in Section 5.6.1, some individuals even reported feeling suicidal as a result of the assessments or impending changes. These findings confirm the predictions made by Cross (2013), which anticipated that individuals who are not considered “disabled enough” would suffer most. These findings demonstrate a significant barrier to accessing what should be their right as British citizens (Marshall, 1949). Individuals with multiple disadvantages, who are meant to be protected through the social security system, are being failed by the Government. This type of stigmatisation of individuals with disabilities and illnesses through the welfare system can lead to the individuals facing even further vulnerabilities down the line (Perese, 2007; Whittle et al., 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that measures are taken to protect the individuals from the impacts of these reforms. The following section will discuss longitudinal observations derived from the interviews.

## 5.7 Circumstantial changes and longitudinal observations

### 5.7.1 Overview of longitudinal research element

The longitudinal element of this study was intended to provide an insight into how circumstances have developed, identifying events which impacted the direction of

their lives. Looking reflectively on the interviews, it becomes clear that holding longitudinal interviews with individuals who do not engage with services, perhaps out of mistrust (as introduced in Section 5.4.3.3 and will be further elaborated in Section 7.7) is an incredibly difficult task. It can be considered an achievement to have interviewed individuals considered to be disengaged from services, yet unfortunately none of these individuals were reachable for a follow-up interview. In some cases, phone numbers were disconnected, hinting towards an individual changing their number, and in others, participants did not respond to messages. One participant, Karl, replied that they could not participate because they had found employment. Those who took part in the follow-up interviews were individuals already heavily involved in services, some even taking part in local events which included the local community in decision-making surrounding changes impacting inequality.

## 5.7.2 Circumstantial changes

### 5.7.2.1 New employment, voluntary position or education

Despite the timeframe of six months not being considerably long, the participants did share some mainly positive circumstantial changes. Some participants, who were previously unemployed, now reported as being employed. Although Karl did not participate in the follow-up interviews, he left a message to the interviewer that he was now in full-time employment, so could not participate out of time restraints. Harry reported partaking in employment-related courses provided through a local organisation, which would help him in his future job applications. Ugo reported having taken up volunteering in an organisation he had originally wanted to attend as a service user.

I think it's helped with my confidence. It's given me some sense of purpose and it's allowed me to attach something to my sense of identity, which was predominantly dominated by my nursing role before. I think just doing something where I'm helping out other people makes a difference.

This demonstrates that some of the participants had positive changes to report. James likewise had a new position as a volunteer and had recently started participating in local advocacy work. These changes were stimulated by the participants' engagement in organisations, through which they established a network. The support they received



and the relationships they built encouraged them to start ‘giving back’ to their communities. This process will be elaborated further in Chapter 7.

#### 5.7.2.2 PIP assessment

A considerable number of the follow-up interviewees reported either an upcoming PIP assessment or having partaken in an assessment between the two interviews. Frank, for instance, reports having the PIP assessment he was dreading in his initial interview.

In November [three months ago prior to the interview]. I had til 20th of December to fill it in. Had to get an emergency appointment with the CAB to get it filled out. Had to get a lot of medical information as well that they needed. Haven’t heard anything back yet though.

He entails the effect it had on his mental health.

It just seems that they’re targeting certain people. Making them feel suicidal and kill themselves. I feel like I’m being targeted. I told you last time that I was expecting this.

The effects of the assessments on his mental health are similar to the ones mentioned in section 5.6.1. Frank, suffering from mental illness and learning difficulties himself, struggled dealing with the stress caused by the PIP assessments. His story demonstrated that the effects of the PIP assessments did not improve over time.

#### 5.7.3 Changes in outlook

The participants who took part in the follow-up phase did in some cases show a change in circumstance. In some cases, a significant change in outlook became apparent. James’s experiences are exemplary to evidence the effectiveness of a strong social circle on personal development (as will be elaborated in Chapter 7). During his first interview, James portrayed an anxious manner and had a negative outlook for his future. In the follow-up interview, James admitted to having been high during the initial interview as he was battling addiction at the time. He said at that time he had felt particularly lonely following a family breakdown and losing contact to his daughter.

Ken last time I seen ya, I was high off ma nut. I was really struggling at the time, wi’ a’ the legal highs an’ that. [...] My ex took my daughter away from us, disnae wanna speak to us ken. I took really bad to it.

He talks about his friend at a community group as having a vital impact on his recovery.

I'm really grateful for all the lads down at [the community group], 'cause they helped us get off the drugs. Wi'out them, who knows where I'd be now.

During the follow-up interviews, James seemed a lot more energetic and positive about his future. He spoke of his increasing engagement with the local fairness commissions and charities he volunteers at locally. He spoke passionately about wanting to create change for disadvantaged people.

I want to start standing up for people.

James seemed to have benefitted greatly from the support of the organisation he attended and was keen to give some of that support back to the community. Quinn is another participant who spoke of increased self-confidence. Having partaken in a large art project within the support group he attends provided him with a sense of purpose. He proudly shared his accomplishments on the project and felt that he had improved his skills since the previous interview.

My plan is to ride high on the momentum that [my project] has now, showing it to people and ride high on the momentum, and take a wee bit of a break. It's no being big-headed but I think this one is better made.

In contrast, Tina's mental health had significantly deteriorated since the initial interview. The interview was cut short because it became obvious that she was clearly struggling to speak to the researcher.

You probably wanted more from me today, but I don't have a lot to say. I'm not feeling too well.

Tina attributed this to her mental illness rather than a change in external circumstances. She highlighted that she was under continuous care from her CPN and the organisation through which she was recruited. However, most of the participants reported a positive change in their outlook for the future, which was often related to their participation in

a local organisation. How these organisations had impacted the lives of the individuals will be the foci of the next two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7).

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the effects of inequality are experienced by individuals on a day-to-day basis. The inequalities individuals experience reach far beyond financial inequalities. The participants faced barriers when attempting to access stable employment (see Section 5.3.4) and were unfairly treated when attempting to access welfare (see Section 5.6), highlighting the individuals' limited access to social institutions.

One of the most striking findings is how successful or financially stable some of the individuals were prior to the traumatic life event that caused their impoverished life circumstances. The lack of freedom of individuals to achieve wellbeing is well-documented (Sen, 1999) and supported throughout this research. The steps taken by individuals to secure financial stability had no effect on the individuals' ability to avoid falling into a poverty trap. Common among the individuals was being raised in impoverished households. It is likely that this could be the key factor in why the individuals were so severely financially affected by their trauma. Individuals who come from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to have safety nets, such as assets or family resources, to protect from the financial impact of these types of experiences (Kohli, 1999; Appleyard and Rowlingson, 2010). This raises the importance of government intervention in this area. It should not be a luxury to have financial stability after a traumatic life event. Not having financial resources during a time which already takes a strong psychological toll only worsened the material deprivation that the individuals experienced.

The longitudinal element of this study was aimed at providing a detailed understanding of circumstantial change and the drivers for these changes. Whilst the nature of the individuals' lives meant that it was not possible to contact many of the participants for a follow-up for a number of reasons, such as changing phone numbers, they did show an insight into the dynamic nature of poverty, such as James's story, whose situation significantly improved from the initial interview through the provision of services he accessed for support. The following chapter will focus on the provision of

services. It will discuss how individuals accessed services and how services function from within.

## 6. Services

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss findings on the reality of support services in Dundee. This includes data from all research phases, i.e. from interviews with service users, support workers and policymakers, as well as the results of a survey conducted with support organisations. The balance of both qualitative and quantitative findings will provide a unique holistic and in-depth overview of how a network of support organisations functions to target a common goal of mediating poverty and social exclusion. Initially the research sought out to measure the effectiveness of financial inclusion services, but the phenomenological ontology accompanied by a semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to discover that services which promoted social inclusion through building or maintaining social capital were perceived to be at least equally as important to the respective individuals.

This chapter will first start by providing an overview of the services that participated in this research (Section 6.2). It will then move on to discussing how effective these services were in tackling the issues discussed in the previous chapter (Section 6.3). This section will look at which elements contributed to the success of an organisation, which elements acted as barriers and the suggestions made by participants on how to improve services and remove barriers. The section after this will focus on partnership working (Section 6.4). As established in Section 3.6, partnership working has previously been found to be a potential solution to assisting individuals with multiple complex needs (Kuosmanen and Starke, 2011). This section will discuss how the services which participated in this research collaborated with one another and how this affected how services were carried out. It will also discuss how decisions are made between organisations, including the effect that policy has had on these decisions. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a systems map that summarises the findings of all research phases (Section 6.5). It provides an overview of how poverty drives individuals to access support, how services affect those who access the services, and demonstrates external impacts, such as recent welfare reforms and austerity measures. This provides a visual overview of the findings of all research phases.

## 6.2 Reality of support services in Dundee City

### 6.2.1 Overview of services

A large incentive to conduct this study was to identify the effectiveness of support services in their goal of alleviating poverty and improving social and economic equality. In order to help understand the role services can play in firstly, mediating the impact of poverty and secondly, prevent its occurrence in future, this study conducted a systems approach to generate a holistic understanding of the functioning of support services. Systems approaches promote the benefit of understanding influences on a network both internally and externally, providing a deep insight to the operational structures of interlinked organisations that may not be as prominent when applying alternative research methods (Crozier, 1972). A basic, but perhaps easily overlooked thought when evaluating services structures is to re-evaluate their cause for existence. Though it may seem self-evident, re-evaluating their purpose can offer a meaningful insight into the decision-making processes that drive the dynamics with a sector that is constantly adapting to the dynamics of society, including changes in legislation, culture and infrastructure (Thane, 2009). As highlighted in Chapter 5, poverty is generally caused by a complex interaction of economic and social factors which restrict certain individuals from participating in certain elements of society. Some of the earliest social services were documented in the UK through the Elizabethan poor law with the intention of supporting those individuals who are excluded from society by alleviating certain elements that are associated with this exclusion, such as providing the provision of necessities (e.g. food and housing) to assist individuals who could not work. Since then services have adapted to support individuals with a range of disadvantages. To date, the services are largely used to mediate the impact of poverty and deprivation, rather than eradicate it, through support services that provide necessities and moral support (Thane, 2009). Neoliberal policies have been adopted and advocated by the British national government which transfer the responsibility of local issues to local organisations (Murray, 2013; Geddes, 2011). Increasing economic pressures make it difficult for local authorities to persevere their efforts to tackle inequality, as the changes driving these pressures are not only dynamic and thus make it difficult to maintain resilience but come from an external source over which they have no power. These economic changes have occurred in the shape of welfare reforms, restricting and altering the types of support available to service users, and

austerity measures, likewise restricting and altering the support available to service operations (Hill, 2015). In order to find a sustainable solution to these dynamic changes, local authorities have sought to collaborate with varying levels of organisations, from public bodies such as local councils to small Third Sector organisations and service users (Lyall, 2015). This approach seemingly offers an alternative process which includes perspectives from individuals which are classically considered to be “powerless” (Narayan, 2000). In Dundee, which is used as a case study for this research, the Dundee Fairness Strategy (Dundee Partnership, 2012) was developed as a method of including individuals from the community in the development of social strategies, as well as promoting the inclusion of smaller, Third Sector organisations, which have previously been found to be the less powerful actors within a partnership (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014).

When referring to Third Sector services, this research refers to organisations such as charities, social enterprises, and community groups, which have the intention of contributing to the wellbeing of their community. This is the official characterisation as accepted by the Scottish Government (2019b). In the initial questionnaire, which was sent out to participants who accessed services, the participants reported accessing the following types of Third Sector services:

- Emergency food programmes (e.g. food banks, soup kitchens),
- Specialised care or support groups (e.g. mental health groups, victim support, substance use),
- Community social groups (e.g. gardening groups).

Despite a recent increase in funding towards Third Sector organisations, a scarcity of data, or rather a multitude of divergent impact measurements of these services, prevents a comprehensive overview of effective anti-poverty measures. The organisations are funded through alternative income sources, such as crowdfunding, independent funding bodies, or grants. Funding bodies are currently the main driver of service provision, as austerity measures have additionally restricted the subsidy towards supporting Third Sector organisations (Harlock, 2013).

**Table 6.1** Services accessed by the participants

|    | <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Services recently accessed</b>   |
|----|------------------------------|------------|---|
| 1  | Abigail                      | 36         | Social prescribing team, welfare rights team, publicly funded welfare advice                          |
| 2  | Beatrice                     | 57         | Publicly funded welfare advice, soup kitchen, and community group.                                    |
| 3  | Charles                      | 38         | Food bank, alcohol support group, homeless accommodation unit, publicly funded welfare advice         |
| 4  | Diana                        | 31         | Food bank, soup kitchen, substance use support group  |
| 5  | Eric                         | 59         | Soup kitchen, food bank, welfare advice   |
| 6  | Frank                        | 43         | Welfare advice service, community support group, mental health peer support                           |
| 7  | Gordon                       | 48         | Welfare advice, foodbank, substance use support   |
| 8  | Harry                        | 50         | Food bank, soup kitchen, welfare advice   |
| 9  | Isabell                      | 46         | Welfare advice  |
| 10 | James                        | 39         | Welfare advice, soup kitchen, food bank   |
| 11 | Karl                         | 25         | Welfare advice  |
| 12 | Lewis                        | 18         | Welfare advice, homeless shelter, food bank   |
| 13 | Michael                      | 53         | Welfare advice, mental health support group   |
| 14 | Nicole                       | 49         | Welfare advice, food bank   |
| 15 | Olivia                       | 24         | Welfare advice, gender-based violence service   |
| 16 | Penny                        | 48         | Welfare advice, community support group   |
| 17 | Quinn                        | 19         | Welfare advice, Community Psychiatric Nurse, mental health support group                              |
| 18 | Rosie                        | 29         | Mental health support group, alternative therapy, homeless shelter, welfare advice, supported housing |
| 19 | Sam                          | 53         | Mental health support groups, men's support group, welfare advice                                     |
| 20 | Tina                         | 44         | Welfare advice, mental health support group   |
| 21 | Ugo                          | n/a        | Welfare advice, community support group   |
| 22 | Veronica                     | 24         | Welfare advice, social services   |
| 23 | Warren                       | 59         | Welfare advice  |

The participants reported accessing a range of public services, such as financial and welfare advice services and social workers (see Table 6.1). The individuals also accessed social workers, community psychiatric nurses (CPNs), and others which



could be classified within the bracket of support services. However, these will be treated differently as often they were mandatory and thus not chosen by the individuals as a means to personal betterment. The differentiation between organisations that individuals chose for support and those that were accessed as a means of necessity is important to this research, not only as it can give an insight into whether public funding is being spent on the correct organisations, but also because the participants viewed the organisations differently. Organisations which were accessed as a means of necessity were mainly public agencies. In some cases, necessity refers to a financial necessity, such as financial advice or crisis loans, or when individuals were prescribed a certain service as part of rehabilitation from mental illness or substance use. Discourse surrounding public organisations was frequently described less favourably. Advice workers were labelled as “people from the Council” and whilst the participants did not necessarily think unfavourably of the workers themselves, the connotation with the authorities gave the participants a negative disposition towards the individuals which inevitably resulted in a mistrust towards them. The following section will further discuss how participants reached out to services.

#### 6.2.2 Outreach and access

The way in which individuals accessed services had a large impact on how they judged its efficacy in the long term. Organisations with more financial resources were able to advertise their service publicly, leading to higher numbers of service users. A worker from a public body reported their service being very well advertised in public spaces, which is not just representative of their extensive financial resources, but also led to a higher rate of familiarity and access rates.

Our phone number is on the back of buses. Especially for adult support and protection, if people are concerned, they'll just reach us through that. Our phone number is everywhere. Sometimes the GP has asked people to phone us, but the people don't know why.

One of the service users, Olivia, mentioned first accessing her adviser through an advertisement on a leaflet she received through her letterbox.

I got a letter through saying that I could apply for [a financial support programme], and I phoned up and queried about it, cause obviously having the children, and they said they'd get someone out to discuss it more. That's when I met [my adviser].

Olivia is one of the participants who has had little interaction with services, only accessing those that were absolutely necessary in a time of financial crisis. She has access to a single support worker who conducts home visits and provides direct financial advice, predominantly on handling utility bills. In contrast, most of the participants have had longstanding contact with services of choice, often after having navigated the system extensively to reach a service which was suitable for their needs. Of the 23 participants, 15 had been long-term service users who were very familiar with the service structures and navigated them rather easily. Being involved with one organisation often meant gaining access to other organisations, though usually having one preferred organisation to turn to in times of need. However, the confidence instilled through accessing one organisation led the individuals to access short-term support services, such as food banks or advice services with less hesitation than during initial access. This demonstrates that a level of familiarity with the service network was necessary to have the agency to access services independently.

This level of familiarity had not always been the case. There is a clear differentiation between an individual's first contact with an organisation and their first actual engagement with it. When first contacting an organisation, there were some underlying psychological hindrances to completely engaging with the service. Predominantly this was attributed to feelings of shame to access support, but other factors such as mistrust towards the support workers, or not believing that the support would be beneficial to the participant were other factors named in the decision-making process. This shame is the result of internalised stigma, developed through the long-term exposure to discriminatory attitudes from the wider society (Lister, 2015). In contrast to the individuals which have navigated the service network with ease, individuals who sought help but were reluctant to engage with services were also of high interest to this study. Initially, it proved difficult to find individuals with this background to participate with the study. The researcher collaborated with a financial advice service which individuals accessed as a first access organisation (this will be clarified in Section 6.4.2). This opened the door to this particular population group, offering significant insights to the lives of individuals who have limited interaction with wider institutions, i.e. individuals who are considered to be 'socially excluded' (Pierson, 2002). This respective advice service was promoted by postal advertisement and offered home visits, providing financial advice, suggesting relevant local support

services, and, if needed, providing assistance in the form of food parcels or vouchers towards utility bills. For many, this service was a first point of access to support. Having hit a point of severe financial difficulties, they contacted the service as they knew no other means to improving their circumstances. This research was then brought to the attention of the individuals accessing this service, which led to the access of a participant group who have either had no or very minimal contact with the service network. Olivia was one of these participants. Though she had only just started accessing services, her first contact process very much reflects that of many participants.

I didn't get involved with them straight away. I did have a bit of a barrier up and never contacted anybody, and then eventually I let them in and started speaking. But it did take us a bit of time, but they did say that I'd be on the waiting list and whenever I phoned, if I needed somebody to talk to.... So it's okay that way.

It was evident that embarrassment or feelings of inadequacy far outweighed the necessity for service access in the decision-making process of these individuals. In his early stages of requiring support, Ugo is a prime example of an individual who wanted to be supported but blames internalised masculinity<sup>40</sup> from preventing him to accept support.

I was certainly approached and told that the support was there. Being a typical man, I never asked for directions. It's a self-taught mechanism, but I can only blame myself.

The social construct of not wanting to seek support prevented Ugo from accessing support that aided him once he overcame that barrier, highlighting that the route to accessing services can be dependent on a complex internal process. It is unclear whether a greater outreach can assist individuals who are hesitant to seek support. For example, here Diana entails her journey of why she started engaging after a long period of mistrusting services.

Five years [of unsuccessful service provision]. One person every week. Weekly appointments. It was sporadic to start with, then a wee while... I wasn't engaging, then I started engaging when I thought there was a chance of getting my kids back,

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<sup>40</sup> Internalised masculinity is a term utilised in gender studies to describe character traits which are socialised as being "typically male". Attempting to conform to these attributes can result in shame and mental illness (Rice et al., 2016)

and sounds quite... It was the only reason I done it. It was in the back of my mind, “if I keep doing this”. But it helped me. Cause you’ve got tae. People just keep saying just get aff the drugs. But that’s nae good. You’ve got to go do the underlying work. How you’ve used in the first place, speak through things, but... I was one a’ the fortunate ains, ‘cause I got a good worker. I’ve no had great experiences with services. Obviously social services, the children services, I feel like [social services] coulda done a lot more. But ken what? There’s no point on being stuck on that. It’s no gonna change. My kids are alright. It took me a long time to accept it. It’s about them.

This story reflects a concern expressed also by other participants. Diana had her children taken away by authorities as her social worker discovered she had been taking heroin with her abusive ex-partner. Individuals who have had bad experiences with authorities tend to mistrust them, as they feel monitored more than they feel supported. Particularly individuals who are in a vulnerable state, as Diana was, may struggle to reach out for support (Balda, 2016). Drug addiction and domestic abuse are experiences which can be heavily guarded secrets by the victims, as they are afraid of the repercussions if they would disclose their detailed histories. This links back to the lack of institutional trust as discussed in Section 5.4.3.3. Individuals had felt unfairly treated by authorities, making them feel powerless and have subsequently developed an antagonistic outlook towards them. This demonstrates the powerlessness and voicelessness which Narayan (2000) characterises as the embodiment of poverty. This creates a barrier to fully engaging with certain organisations through which individuals feel discriminated against and feel a disparity in power. Environments in which this power disparity is relinquished, on the other hand, can be very successful in engaging the individuals. These will be discussed in further detail in Section 6.3.5 and Chapter 7. The following section will discuss elements which determined the efficacy of a service.

## 6.3 Service efficacy

### 6.3.1 Overview

Having discussed how service users reach out to services, this next section will look at the key attributes of a service which determined its success. Success in this case is determined by its perceived value by primarily service users, in contrast to the more quantitative approach used by the organisations themselves when evaluating outcomes (Adam and Green, 2014). These following sections will also detail input provided by

support workers, particularly in reference to any structural process that facilitate or disrupt effective service provision.

### 6.3.2 Barriers to effective service provision

Objective 2 of this project seeks to identify structural barriers that limit effective service provision (see Section 1.5). To answer this question, it is important to understand how service provision can be run effectively on a holistic basis, meaning that it is primarily viewed as effective by the service user, but also that it runs effectively from within the organisations. Therefore, the input from support workers and policymakers on what they consider successful to be service provision in contrast to service users is considered to be highly valuable and insightful. Generally, all actors within the network agreed on how support should be carried out in an ideal scenario. However, the interviews with service users predominantly focussed on service user/support worker interaction styles, whilst interviews with support workers predominantly focussed on internal barriers and what advice was given.

The overarching theme present in the support workers' concerns was the funding process. This took two forms, namely a lack of available funding, or a misguided funding application process which focuses too strongly on quantitative outcomes and novel approaches. Apart from the referral agency, which had a steady income stream as a public body, all support workers spoke of the hindrance of the effect on service provision due to the time-consuming process of funding applications. The worker from the community support group found this to be a particularly arduous process. A worker from a community support group found the need to demonstrate innovative approaches to be a hindrance. Though speaking of a "solid base" of service users who report the effectiveness of the service, they reported struggling with funding.

It's really hard for us. Especially in the last few years, we've really struggled to get the funding. The bodies just want you to show that you're taking novel approaches to everything. Why should we have to change what we're doing if it works? We've had to shut down the building a few times because we thought we were going to close down, but we managed to get things sorted in the end.

This quote resonates with the findings of Lindsay, Osborne and Bond (2014), who found that smaller organisations often have to change their service models to fit the expectations of funders. This could result in service users who benefit from the

services to suffer. Many of the service users in this study were aware of the lack of funding available to the services, and particularly when their view of the service providers and support workers was favourable, they felt sympathy for the heavy workload of workers and felt a disdain towards the “others” that did not provide funding for what they considered to be an integral element to their wellbeing. Sam, a service user, felt strongly about the lack of funding for a community support group which he describes as “lifesaving”.

The thing about these centres is, I think the first thing I'd say about [this community support group] is what I said before, I get really pissed off. It was one time this place got shut for a little while, because [the manager] didn't get the funding. That was years ago. That was in the earlier days. I always keep saying to myself, why the hell aren't people putting money into projects like this. The way I'm looking at it is, people are saying it's lifesaving, yet the government aren't putting money into this. Right. And yet, if you don't put money into projects like this, and it collapsed, then you'll get a lot of people in [the local psychiatric hospital] or create more suicides.

As predicted above, the lack of funding, which was particularly apparent for smaller organisations, has devastating impacts on those who rely on the services for their wellbeing. This is an inevitable factor for the services; however, this finding could have implications towards the decision-making of funders towards services which have a long-lasting impact on individuals. Michael, a service user, spoke about how he feels the service users suffer under this constant struggle for funding.

I think also, at the moment, when you've got a lot of these charity organisations, they're all fighting for funding. I think that's why they all come into complete rivalry with each other. They're all after funding, they're all after money- not saying money, I don't mean that in a nasty way, but that's how they exist. They have to come into the competition for the pot. For me, that's when it all becomes disparate, the competition. And that's where the client, who tends to be at the centre of everything, isn't. The client then becomes a bit of a pawn. Well-meaning organisations do exist, but they need funding. For me, I think that is a big area of improvement.

The services which individuals in this research described as being “life-saving” often reported severely struggling under the lack of financial resources available to them. This highlights a need for rethinking the funding allocation for services which have long-term, positive consequences for individuals in poverty. Organisations are

subjected to the neoliberal ideal of competing for resources with other bodies, mirroring market competition of the private sector. Competition may, arguably, be good for some sectors of the market where innovation and new ideas are helpful for progress, such as the private sector, but for the support services this is clearly an ineffective approach (Zimmer and Pahl, 2018). This justifies a restructuring of the ways in which support organisations are funded. Despite these barriers, some elements of service provision can encourage engagement with a service. The following section will discuss these elements in more detail.

### 6.3.3 Relationship between support worker and service users

#### 6.3.3.1 The importance of a good bond

Familiarity with a service almost intrinsically links to the connections made with other service users and support workers. Whether in a community-based support service or a one-to-one advice service, the relationship to support workers was often mentioned as a key factor not only in the likability of the service, but also in its effectiveness to supporting individuals towards their personal goals. Services in which boundaries are “blurred” have been found to be favourable as they promote a symbolic gesture to the social integration of the service users in that community. Blurred boundaries refer to an alleviation of the perceived power disparity between service users and staff or volunteers, for instance through the provision of peer workers (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018). Service users spoke highly of community organisations in which boundaries were blurred (see Section 7.6). The blurring of boundaries between volunteers and service users not only contributed to a co-production of the shared space and transformation of organisational values, but increased feelings of inclusion, and consequently their individual wellbeing. Overall, support workers both in the public sector and the Third Sector were viewed favourably. Yet there was a difference in the way in which the relationship was perceived. Hierarchical elements were detected by the service users, but they did not necessarily impact their view of the service worker if their exchange was favourable. There was however a higher likelihood of an unfavourable attitude towards a support worker if they were deemed as acting superior. For instance, Karl differentiated between institutions that he viewed as being powerful and having control over his finances. He started the discussion by recalling an incident with a “disrespectful” assessor from the DWP, referring to how he “wasn’t listened to” and was “treated like [garbage]”.

It's the job centre and the Government. It's not the Council. I know it sounds stupid, but you'll get really lovely people and you get lovely customer service. They treat you with the upmost respect. I know Dundee City. I love the city. They've helped me. They've housed me. Everything I've had a problem with they've helped me. If it wasn't for the Council I probably wouldn't have gotten through this year.

In Diana's case, she perceived her social worker as kind, but she was afraid that honesty might lead to her losing custody of her children due to her past experiences with social workers. These experiences demonstrate that even when experiences with a service were viewed favourably, the individuals were still very much aware of the power services had to make high-impact decisions over their lives, relating back to the feeling of powerlessness as described earlier in Section 6.2.2.

One of the attributes that was viewed as being desirable in a social worker was honesty. When Rosie received support from her worker in supported accommodation, she found her support worker's honesty particularly helpful.

She didn't bullshit me. I don't like bullshitters. I'm dyslexic so I can't read between lines. So, I like people to tell it just like it is. She did that.

Rosie also compared her to the less 'honest' support workers.

Oh, people just being overly nice to be, and I'm just like, 'just tell it straight'. I get dead paranoid that people aren't telling the truth, and she was one of those people who just knew that automatically and just said, "fair enough, I'll tell ya".

Rosie highlighted the importance of communicating honestly with her, as it created trust between her and her worker. Once trust was established, a good relationship between a worker and a service user had advantageous effects on the service users' wellbeing. Harry spoke highly of his close relationship to a volunteer at a local soup kitchen, which he had established over years of positive interactions. In the interview, he states the following:

[W]e've become friends. [He's] a mate of mine, class him as a mate.

The relationships built between service users and support workers also had an impact on the support workers' motivation and attitude. The support workers who took part in the interview phase reported on their perception of relationships with service users. The support workers from the two public organisations, which primarily offered



advice services, recalled a rather professional relationship with their clients. The contact generally did not last longer than an hour, so the chance of building a long-lasting relationship was minimal and irregular. A worker from a public sector agency reported their relationship with service users being carried out primarily to identify and fulfil service-related needs.

We offer support, but it's mainly short-term. It might be all that they need. We'll support them up to that point, usually just a few months, and then we'll withdraw. But usually when we pick up a case, we're already looking at where could we go with this? What needs to happen? And sometimes it's just closed at the end of that but sometimes it's referred on to [a specialist team] or voluntary services, whatever service it needs to go to.

The nature of the service provision does not allow for a continuous relationship to flourish, but rather it acts as an immediate gateway to other services if necessary (service types will be identified in Section 6.4.2.2). The workers from the Third Sector also recalled maintaining a professional manner when speaking to their service users. However, some of them recalled friendship-like bonds with their clients. A Third Sector worker also stated forming true friendships with the people accessing the service.

I'd say I've become friends with the people that come here. People that come here are friends with each other. They come in for the social aspect.

These relationships were possible to be established as the workers had regular contact with the individuals in a relaxed environment, such as a community café or community centre, with which the service users were accustomed. This resulted in a removal of a power dichotomy and allowed the participants to fully engage with the workers at the organisation. In some workplaces having a close relationship with service users may be viewed as unprofessional, yet the feeling of being accepted as part of the group was incredibly constructive towards the individual's reported wellbeing. In no cases did either support workers or services users report any feelings of overstepping boundaries or having relationships outside of the organisation. The relationship was confined to the space of the service provision, and this was sufficient for feeling included.

### 6.3.3.2 Support workers missing signs

Support workers can play a vital role in the betterment of an individuals' circumstances. However, in some cases, support workers miss signs that could be crucial to providing the correct services. In missing certain signs, an individual may fall deeper into a chaotic lifestyle and find it harder to recover as a result. The most significant example of this was Diana's story. As mentioned in more explicit detail in Section 5.4.2, Diana had her children removed from her care by social workers as a result of rekindling contact with her abusive ex-partner. She believes that social workers missed crucial signs of her abuse, when she was open about it.

I'm no saying that it wasn't right [to have my children taken], but I think when they took them the second time, I think they coulda been maybe referring us to Women's Aid. They never did any of that. Then that woulda maybe made the reality of abuse and addiction. I never ever thought about it like that. It was more mental torture. I mean he did hit us a couple of times, but I didn't ever think I'd get in Women's Aid, and I did. I think they never referred us to any of these services. I think they should have, ken?

The latter part of this quote illuminates a missed opportunity for the social workers. Whilst Diana's journey led her to stray away from drugs and try to get access to her children in the long run, access to a women's aid organisation may have offered the immediate support she needed. Taking away her children is a punitive solution for someone suffering from abuse and addiction. Her story further reinforces the concept of a lack of control of the individuals over their situations. Although Diana's case was rare within this research, with only one other person mentioning a similar story, the effects of not receiving adequate care can be devastating.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it would be important to train support workers to be able to identify signs of abuse and more readily refer service users to the appropriate services.

### 6.3.3.3 Effect of work on support workers

As this research focused on how services alleviate poverty, the focus naturally shifts towards the perspective of the service users. A theme that emerged as a result of the

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<sup>41</sup> Punitive measures such as removing children from the mother's care when they are struggling with gender-based violence and substance use have been found to be counterproductive on a long-term basis. Services which allow women to take agency over their situation whilst still maintaining their role as a mother were much more effective as they took the mother's wellbeing into consideration (Fang et al., 2014)

phenomenological approach is the effects of being employed as a support worker on the workers' psyche. Understanding this helps to provide a holistic image of the functioning of the support system, as support workers are an integral element to the functioning of the services. As the previous sections have shown, a bad experience with a support worker can make the service user mistrust not only the respective organisation, but also the entire system.

A Third Sector worker recalled her experience of seeing one of their clients develop from being in a "bad place" when first accessing the service to an enthusiastic volunteer and valued member of the community.

We've got this one gentleman who's been coming in. When he first came, he was in a really "bad place", and he wasn't really all that chatty. It's really nice to see him come along so well. You don't realise how much it helps people's self-esteem. If you can come home at night and think, "That's good. I helped someone today." That's big as well! You don't appreciate how much it means to people.

Following on from this statement, the workers generally considered working in a field that aims to support people a rewarding experience, yet it was not without its consequences. Particularly those in organisations relying on funding applications reported high levels of stress associated with their work. A Third Sector support worker reported struggling with the pressures of the job and had to take an extended sick leave as a result of it.

I've had to take a few months off work. The stress was just getting to me. It's not the people, but I just feel like I never get a break.

This is indicative of the issues of working in a field in which people rely on the workers' support, when consistent care is required. As the outlook of the support worker can have a significant impact on the service users' engagement with the service, as mentioned in Sections 6.3.3.1 and 6.3.3.2, it is imperative for organisations to care for the wellbeing of their workers. It may be argued that austerity measures are responsible for longer working hours and an increased workload, yet to ensure effective service provision, it is vital that the support workers' wellbeing is taken into consideration by service managers. The provision of training and counselling services could be a solution to ensuring the wellbeing of support staff, which also affects how

support is carried out to those who access services. The following sections will look at how different types of support affected individuals who accessed services.

#### 6.3.4 Temporary support provided by financial advice services

Financial advice services comprise organisations such as welfare advice, debt advice, or other advice organisations that provide support in financial emergencies (Allmark et al., 2013). All participants of this research had accessed financial advice services, usually during what they described as their most difficult financial situation. It is important to note that 8 out of the 23 service user participants were recruited through financial advice services, but even those recruited through other organisations reported having accessed financial advice services. Participants generally appreciated the support provided by services that provide temporary financial support, such as welfare advice workers or energy advice services. This was relevant for both public and third sector services. However, as these types of services were contacted in times of financial crises, they were not associated with positive experiences overall. Charles summarises his outlook on emergency services in the following statement.

Likes of the food bank and stuff I only use if I'm really struggling. I dinnae use it a lot but if I'm really struggling, I ken that's there, ken what I mean.

Charles's statement demonstrates a feeling of security, knowing that should he be in a crisis there will be support available to him. Framing this within the context of the levels of mistrust towards national institutions such as the DWP (see Section 5.4.3.3), this demonstrates that individuals are more likely to trust local voluntary organisations as they feel that they will more likely be supported through their services than by the social security system. Gordon talks about his experience with a financial advice worker, whom he describes as having had a significant impact on his circumstances.

I had a serious issue, and ongoing issue, and because I had mental health and learning difficulties, I got a one-to-one with him. It took up to a year to sort it out, and if it wasn't for them, I don't know where I'd be.

Whilst the participants generally seemed grateful for the support provided by these types of emergency services, they had a temporary negative effect on their self-confidence, and ultimately their wellbeing. This is because the individuals associated

accessing these types of services with personal failure. James summarised this well in the following statement.

I mean it's good these types of services exist, ken. Just wish I didnae have to use them in the first place.

These organisations are significant components of a system providing intervention services for financial emergencies. They assisted individuals with matters, such as specific welfare or debt enquiries, which are built around extremely complex guidelines and can be difficult to navigate as a layperson. The help of professionals not only gave them advice to remediate their problem, but often also provided financial support in the shape of food vouchers or top-ups for electricity or gas meters. These measures were valued by the service users and stopped them from potentially falling into an irreversible debt trap. However, whilst providing immediate financial support which likely hindered long-term financial difficulties, e.g. through the creation of debt, the service user participants attributed the long-term increase to their wellbeing to another type of services. Community groups and peer support had a significant effect on wellbeing in the long-term, and provided resources for increasing wellbeing, creating support networks, receiving informal and formal advice from peers, and in some cases even receiving opportunities to volunteer or enter paid employment. The following section will give a brief overview of how community groups managed to achieve these effects.

### 6.3.5 Networks built within community groups

A significant finding of this research was the supportive networks individuals had built with one another through accessing the wider service network. Individuals who shared mutual experiences, such as poverty, substance use and mental illness, connected with other individuals in solidarity with one another and built networks of support which were immeasurable to the wellbeing of the participants who were part of these communities. Whilst there may be potential selection bias, as the individuals who access these types of services may be more predisposed to share their experiences with the researcher, these findings offer new insights into how social capital is built by individuals considered to be in poverty. Previous research has found economic deprivation to be linked to a lack of wider social networks (Hall, 1999; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), but this research has provided evidence that individuals who are

considered to be the most ‘excluded’ and have the most ‘complex needs’ (Balda, 2016, p.30) do indeed build networks given the right environment. These networks were generally built in organisations which placed a high value on inclusion and community, in which staff took a more casual approach to interacting with service users (as described in Section 6.3.3.1). The physical environments in which these communities were created often had a ‘café’-like feel to them, meaning a comfortable community setting in which interaction was encouraged. This alleviated power disparities experienced by service users and allowed them to interact with one another in a comfortable environment. Service users were able to overcome the feelings of shame that were created as a result of stigmatisation (Lister, 2015) in an environment where they were viewed as equals. Because of the significant theoretical contributions of these findings, a separate chapter was dedicated to discussing the implications of these communities. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 7, which focuses entirely on what this research characterised as ‘hidden communities’.

#### 6.3.6 Suggestions for improvement

To round up this section, this section will focus on suggestions for improvement, as recommended by service users. This is not to be confused with the conclusion section of this chapter, which will be presented in Section 6.6. One of the most commonly mentioned themes for improvement was an increased awareness of individual needs and increased listening skills, as Abigail summarises in the following statement.

If people don't listen, don't get movement, you don't get closure on your experiences to move onto the next part of your journey.

Hereby, Abigail refers to accessing services to assist in understanding and processing experiences in order to make sense of them, which she describes as only being possible if someone is willing to listen to her story. Abigail attributes this to being essential to mental recovery and being able to move forward from traumatic experiences. Beatrice agreed, further stating that there should be more trust towards individuals showing engagement.

They should show compassion to people. They should show that people is willing to try [...].

More accessible hours were a common theme too, as particularly those with mental illness found that crises can happen at any time, often during “out-of-hours” situations. Penny suggested offering a service which is available to provide face-to-face support on a 24/7 basis.

You need something like this 24/7. That would just be excellent, like places you could drop in in the middle of the night.

One of the most substantial findings of this research is the importance of peer support and community groups. Ugo reflected on the lack of funding towards these types of services in the following quote.

I just think - well they are saving money on benefits and services, dropping funding from drop-in centres and NHS placement services. They've got to really think about putting more money into community services. It will save more money in the long run. I think places like [the community support group I attend] are information networking in themselves, because we're often helping people in similar situations, so we don't need to reinvent the wheel every time.

Ugo makes two significant contributions here. Firstly, he highlights the issue with the current funding environment, which was discussed in Section 6.3.2. Services are required to provide novel concepts to service provision in order to secure funding, mirroring the competition experienced in business, but this can suppress services which are running effectively and supporting individuals successfully (Harlock, 2013). Secondly, Ugo refers to the significance of community services for the long-term wellbeing of individuals who access their support. In conclusion, financial advice organisations were valued as immediate support in times of financial crises; however, the service users focussed their attention much more on the community organisations, which they attended on a long-term basis afterwards. Here they found the resources to combat the social isolation and mental struggles which they struggled with as a result of the traumatic events that they faced prior to falling into poverty. Gaining the confidence to take part in volunteering work and paid employment through the relationships built within the organisations not only has a positive effect for the individuals, but also for the community. Partnership working has attempted to capitalise on this community involvement to create a better community for everyone

involved. The following section will look at what this research has discovered on partnership working.

## 6.4 Partnership working

### 6.4.1 Partnership working in Dundee City

Partnership working is a strategy ever more frequently applied by local authorities as a means to tackle local issues holistically. Health and social care organisations have particularly adopted this kind of approach. Partnership working has shown the incredible capability of bringing services together and launching a combined effort to target the city's most stark inequalities (Phillips, 2002). The aim of this part of the study is to understand the mechanisms that drive partnership working in practice, and whether these have been successful in delivering a better service approach for the service users. Partnership working in the shape of fairness commissions had only been implemented in its pilot project in Islington, London, four years prior to the commencement of this study (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011). Therefore, the evidence base to suggest the longevity and effectiveness of this approach was relatively scarce. In Dundee, the Fairness Commission was created in 2012 by the Dundee Partnership, which consists of the local council, police force, health services and voluntary organisations. The aim of the commission was to reduce social and economic inequality through taking an approach which is inclusive of members of the public and takes its voice into consideration (Dundee Partnership, 2012). The Dundee Partnership (2019b), as is implied through the name of the organisation, also advocates a higher collaboration between public agencies, communities and Third Sector services within the city. Whilst the official members of the partnership consist of a list of local authorities and public bodies (e.g. Dundee City Council, NHS Tayside, Tayside Police, DWP, educational bodies), it also advocates cooperation with local communities and smaller groups as a strategic measure. The following section will detail how this has been actualised in practice and how this has affected its goal of improving service provision and tackling poverty.

In the fields of health and social care, partnership working is well established, as the concept of partnerships has been advocated for many years (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013). In this study, the partnerships in these sectors seemed to be much more established than in the welfare and financial advice sector. Previously, partnerships of



voluntary organisations with public or private organisations led to an increase in regulations to adhere by (Levitt, 2012) and can result in innovative organisations being treated as a client to meet the demands of its sponsor (Sinclair et al., 2018). This is problematic because smaller organisations often already struggle to keep up with the high demand in bureaucracy due to limited financial resources and consequently limited work capacity. There was a clear difference in the perceived influence of partnership working between public and Third Sector workers. Public sector workers reported a more official approach to partnership working, likely due to being official members of the Dundee Partnership (2019b), whereas smaller Third Sector organisations generally had a less official approach to partnership working with one another. A support worker who worked within a Third Sector organisation that was part of an official partnership stated that their organisation advertised the other members of the partnership to the individuals who accessed her services. Other than occasional meetings with other workers to discuss how to improve service provision, there was little regulatory work surrounding their partnership. The relationship was reported as being collaborative and supportive. As the organisations were run by volunteers and funded through donations, they were not subjected to the same level of competition as organisations that relied on funding to provide services. The manager from one of the organisations, who managed this on a voluntary basis, mentioned receiving informal support from other organisations.

I got a lot of help from [another organisation], because they had been going for quite a while and they were able to come in and say, “We’ve been doing this for a long time and we’ve not had any problems.” They had the experience and also had this really bossy lady, who was lovely, but we had to say no to. The [services] are really working together and it’s really good that the collaboration is there without the competition, you know?

This quote demonstrates that collaboration is indeed possible in a scenario without competition. However, these particular organisations had the benefit of volunteer labour, rent-free locations, and donated goods; whilst most organisations rely on financial resources for staff, rent, and other costs associated with providing services. Some Third Sector organisations had a financial relationship with the Dundee Partnership, meaning that they were awarded funding for a specific amount of time to continue their services. This gave them some stability for the amount of time during

which that funding was awarded. However, it also created issues for the organisations. The quote mentioned in Section 6.3.2, in which a worker questioned the need to demonstrate novel approaches to secure funding, resonates with the quote from Ugo in Section 6.3.6. Both quotes highlight the issues within the current funding environment, which requires providing constantly innovative service provision, despite having found a functioning method of providing services to service users. This demonstrates that the nature of funding bodies does not only stifle innovation (Sinclair et al., 2018), but it can also hinder the longevity of effective services.

All workers reported experiences with an element of partnership working, i.e. the referral process. As the Dundee Partnership (2014) aimed to increase coordinated service provision through an increase of referrals, this was adopted as the most significant indicator of partnership working in this study. The referral process was mainly for the benefit of the service users. For instance, if service users require support from a specific organisation, the support worker with whom they were in contact would contact local organisations that could potentially provide the support as requested by the service user. However, whilst this research focuses on this precise element of partnership working as set out in the 2014 action plan by the Dundee Partnership, workers within the sector defined partnership working in terms of mutual decision-making. One of the policymakers described what she considered to be a partnership, with reference to her own organisation.

[...] we're not a standing organisation as such. We all have parent companies such as the Council and NHS Tayside. [...] Partnership is quite a broad statement. [Our partnership has a] support system making major decisions in a partnership way. So, if I talked about integrated care for example, we have representatives from the Third Sector, from carers, from service users, however the partnership isn't necessarily from different organisations. So you'd have to make decisions about how funding is spent. We'd need to check with the strategic planning group for future directions.

Her quote resonates with the idea that partnerships are not an established entity, but rather an ongoing, dynamic process. Whilst collaborative efforts seemed to be on the rise, smaller voluntary workers did not feel like they were included in an official partnership. They reported a sense of stronger connections but did not feel like equal partners to the larger, more structured bodies in the city. A worker in the public sector

gave a detailed description of how the public organisation she works for conducts a very collaborative effort to create an individual plan for people who need support.

We meet [weekly] with a health colleague, fire staff, policemen, community and safety staff, a representative from a [local service] partnership. [They work] with the GP surgeries. So we'll work with [them] and discuss the referrals and what we've got on each person. What health information there is. What police information there is. Then we'll decide: do they need a visit? Do they need a letter? Does a GP need to be involved? What can we do to help this person?

The very structured collaboration in this case was unique to this study. This demonstrates how health and social care organisations have a very well-established working strategy. As set out by Petch, Cook and Miller (2013), this resulted in a higher coordination between services, reducing the need for a complex referral process, which service users found to be a distressing process (see Section 6.4.3.2). Thus, an increase in coordination and a more effective referral process would be imperative to implement throughout all sectors.

In addition to the fusion of services through partnership working schemes, workers in public services spoke of their experiences with redevelopment schemes.

We've been going through some redevelopment of what we should be doing. If we should still be working in the [our current team] team, or if we should be doing more of the personal care and housework assessments.

The theme of uncertainty of upcoming changes was common amongst workers, particularly as the dynamic nature of the role meant that structural changes were a frequent occurrence. A public sector worker spoke of high levels of uncertainty through the review of the redevelopment.

[We've been] doing everything, the whole gambit. We've been going through review, and ultimately, we don't know what the team is gonna look like.

Whilst the changes were welcomed by workers, as they were aimed to increase coordination and reduce bureaucracy, the workers expressed a lack of clarity over new regulations and procedures, temporarily adding uncertainty and higher levels of stress to their workload. Despite these issues, workers generally spoke highly of partnership working and advocated the importance of increasing interorganisational relationships.

The following sections will look in more detail at what this study found on a specific element of interaction between the networks, namely the referral process. This research has conducted a Social Network Analysis (SNA) on organisations in Dundee, which are linked directly or indirectly to the wider strategy of alleviating inequality. The following sections will detail the findings of this research phase.

#### 6.4.2 Social network analysis

##### 6.4.2.1 Organisational characteristics

The Social Network Analysis comprised a large part of this research phase. It provides a detailed insight into the varied types of services which exist in the Dundee network, and most importantly, it will provide an insight into how social care organisations transfer service users between one another and the wider associated service network, which is an integral part of this research, and ultimately, of partnership working (Nicaise et al., 2013; Kogetsidis, 2012). Before getting into the details of partnership working strategies, this section will provide an overview of the answers to the survey questions which were aimed to give an insight to the types of services which took part in the study.

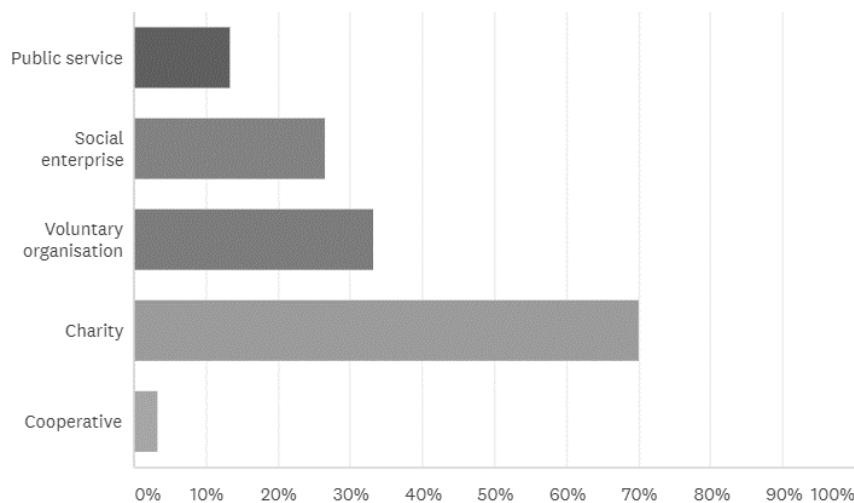
After asking organisations to state their name, the organisations were asked to summarise their organisational aim, in 30 characters or less. The answers demonstrated a great variety in types of services, but they also shared a main commonality. Despite the great variation in sub-groups, one commonality remains, as is evident through the three most commonly mentioned words: “provide”, “people” and “support” (see Figure 6.1). No matter the type of service users targeted, the focus of the organisations is to support individuals with an issue experienced in their lives.

- Dundee City Council,

- Scottish Government,
- Dundee Partnership,
- Big Lottery fund,
- Other private funding bodies,
- Donations,
- Trading (social enterprise).

This demonstrates that the majority of funding came from local and national government, i.e. public funding.

In the survey, organisations were asked to state the type of organisation they considered themselves to be. This was to understand the types, and prevalence, of organisations which exist in Dundee, as well as to understand the variety of organisations taking part in the research. As the term “charity” encompasses a range of organisational types, it was expected that this would be the most commonly selected organisational type.



**Figure 6.2** Percentage of total organisations which identified with organisational types (more than one answer possible)

The respondents were given the option to select more than one organisational type. Eighteen organisations identified with only one organisational type (ten charities, three public services, three social enterprises, one voluntary organisation, and one other). Six organisations identified with two models, the most common combination

being “charity and voluntary organisation” (N=4). A further four organisations identified with three models, whilst a final organisation followed four.

#### 6.4.2.2 The referral process as an indicator of good partnership work

Understanding the referral process was key to this research, as the referral process was used as an indicator of inter-organisational partnerships. Referrals were also integral to understanding how service users navigated the system, i.e. how knowledge of a service spreads through a social network. Whilst the main part of this section will focus on the responses to the survey questions, which asked whether the organisations receive or make referrals to other organisations, and if so, with whom, the next part of this section will set the scene through interview answers on the referral process. The referral process is important, as the way it is conducted can determine whether the service user will engage with the service and ultimately, if it is successful in assisting the service user towards their goal (Humphreys and Tucker, 2002). One of the benefits of partnership working is its ability to reduce the referral process and increase service coordination, which can have a positive impact on individual wellbeing and service engagement (Petch, Cook and Miller, 2013). The interviews gave a good insight into the way in which referrals were carried out. A factor which underlines the working style of public services is that the referral process was very bureaucratic. A worker from the public sector led the most structured referral process of the five participants. Partnership working was highly established between a range of statutory organisations.

The referrals really come from anywhere though. NHS24, Police Tayside, fire service. Do a lot of joint work with the fire service. [Every week] we have an early screening group meeting, so every week police will send us adult concern reports. Any time they work with someone and have concerns about them, they'll let us know. Like if someone's been suicidal or involved with drugs, domestic abuse. Anything really. If they're in compromising positions they'll refer them onto us.

However, whilst the collaboration efforts had been running effectively, there has not been any feedback on whether the organisations have supported the service users towards their aims.

[...] we've never reviewed whether it's been good where they've been referred onto. Sometimes we will hear from the referring agent saying that they're engaging or not.

The workers in Third Sector organisations had a less formal approach to referrals, but nevertheless referred people to other organisations. The following support worker talked about helping a service user to find an appropriate service locally.

I wouldn't say that we really refer people anywhere officially, but we get people from the welfare teams coming in and speaking to people. If anyone needs help with a specific service, I'd be happy to help them find it, and the others are happy to share their experiences too.

Another Third Sector worker likewise spoke of a less official referral process, despite working in an official partnership with other organisations.

We get referrals from all over town. Like I said, we don't do the official referral system, as in you don't need a referral to come here. If you say you're hungry and you need some food, we will give you some food. But people will recommend us from other agencies, particularly those we work in partnership with, or others will have been told about us by their friends.

Generally, self-referrals are seen as a positive occurrence as they allow the service user to have power over the decision of which service to attend. However, they were only mentioned by participants who already reported a level of engagement of services. Six participants mentioned being made aware of a service through a friend, who had been through a similar issue and found the respective service to be valuable. They are also representative of individual decision-making processes and can have valuable insight as to how an organisation becomes known amongst potential users. Whilst word-of-mouth is generally a welcomed method for raising awareness of services, problems can arise when involvement is involuntary. A public sector worker spoke of the concerns when individuals attempt to forcibly involve family members.

Capacity and consent is a huge issue as well. We can't go knock on someone's door and say that "your daughter has phoned and said you [aren't coping]". We'll tell them that they need to speak to each other and then get the person to phone up themselves. We can't get involved in a family ambush.

The referral process was purposefully chosen as a method of analysis to understand the extent of partnership working between organisations. It is indicative of the relationships built between organisations to the extent of trusting them to effectively support their clients or service users (Sheehy, 2017).



When asked whether they received referrals from other Dundee-based organisations, only two stated that they relied on self-referrals only. The other organisations received referrals from other Dundee-based organisations. Nine organisations received referrals solely from public sector organisations or public institutions. One organisation solely received referrals from Third Sector organisations. The remaining 18 organisations received referrals from a wide spectrum of both public and Third Sector organisations. Seventeen organisations received referrals from over five organisations. Typically, once a respondent had listed five organisations from which they received referrals, respondents added "etc." or "and many more". Therefore, five is taken as the minimum number of referral organisations for this analysis. The maximum number stated was from the Dundee Foodbank which reported receiving referrals from over 100 organisations. The following analysis did not include non-reported relationships, but solely the relationship listed as being the most relevant to the organisations. Some of the participating organisations already constituted an official partnership in themselves, such as the Council Advice Service or Dundee Drop-in Services. These organisations were classified as a whole, though being comprised of several teams and subdivisions. When other organisations spoke of referrals to or from these teams, they referred to the organisation as a whole rather than the individual teams.

Online Social Network Analysis software (Kumu.io) was applied to the findings of the final survey questions. This provided the advantage of creating maps and using analytical tools to better understand strengths and weaknesses within the network. Social network maps have been created to visualise the referral process between organisations (see Appendices 8 and 9). The maps created should only act as an insight to relationships of participating organisations in Dundee. It is not representative of the service structure in Dundee as a whole. This would require a much larger study surveying the hundreds of organisations locally. However, from the information supplied by the 30 participating organisations, the map has gathered some information on a total of 112 local organisations. This adds up to between a third and a quarter of Dundee-based support services, based on estimates from two directories: the Dundee Voluntary Action (2018) group and the OSCR<sup>42</sup> (2018) list. The full maps created through the SNA can be found in the appendix (Appendices 8 and 9).

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<sup>42</sup> OSCR is a regulatory body of Scottish charities (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)

**Table 6.2** Application of SNA methods in analysis

| <b>Aim</b>   | <b>Mechanism</b>   | <b>Reasoning</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Identify key actors within the network</b>                        | Use multiple factors of centrality: <b>degree value</b> (number of connections), <b>betweenness</b> (flow of information), and <b>closeness</b> (influence over network) | This would give an idea as to which types of organisations have the most power within the service network. Understanding this could give background to the implications of potential power imbalances.  |
| <b>Identify referral agencies</b>                                    | Identify organisations with high levels of “ <b>outdegrees</b> ” (i.e. number of referrals made to external organisations)   | These would be key actors who do not necessarily provide services themselves but have the ability to provide the service user access to a multitude of services.  |
| <b>Identify successful support services</b>                          | Identify organisations with high numbers of “ <b>indegrees</b> ” (i.e. number of incoming referrals), but not outdegrees   | This would provide an insight into which organisations receive a lot of referrals and are viewed as being helpful amongst other organisations. It could also indicate high levels of demand on an organisation.   |
| <b>Identify communities within a network</b>                         | Detecting “ <b>clusters</b> ” (i.e. highly linked actors) within the network   | Understanding which organisations work together can give an insight into the types of connections organisations prefer to build.  |
| <b>Identify types of organisations through their referral styles</b> | Outdegree and indegree measures can identify whether organisations are more likely to refer, to receive referrals, or do both.   | Organizations with high indegrees are likely to be organisations that provide long-term results. Organisations with high outdegrees are likely to be advice or referral agencies. Organisations with high in- and outdegrees are likely to be gateway organisations, i.e. providing some sort of immediate support and advice, but also have a vast knowledge of other organisations to refer service users to. |

The Social Network Analysis provided some valuable insight into the way relationships work within the Dundee service sector, particularly into who the key players are and which organisations. Data from the survey was entered into the online

software and it was able to differentiate between inward connections and outward connections. Inward connections refer to when an organisation receives referrals from another organisation, whereas outward connections refer to an organisation referring service users to another organisation. Table 6.2 discusses how measures of SNA were applied for the analysis of this research.

**Table 6.3** Ranking of services within the SNA by degree value

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>Label</i>   | <i>Type of support offered<sup>43</sup></i>                                      | <i>Degree value</i> |
|-------------|--|--|---------------------|
| #1          | Council Advice Services (DEEAP, Welfare Rights, CONNECT) <sup>44</sup>             | Advice and assistance with money advice, debts, benefits, energy advice and more | 41                  |
| #2          | Dundee City Council Social Work team (First Contact and Child Protective Services) | Referrals and assessments  | 24                  |
| #3          | MAXwell Centre   | Empowerment and community support  | 23                  |
| #4          | New Pathways CIC   | Housing support and accommodation, homeless service                              | 21                  |
| #5          | DEAP (Employment and Aftercare)  | Employability training, life skills, advocacy, etc.                              | 21                  |

To identify general key players within the network, degree-centrality was measured by calculating the number of connections between nodes. This means counting the number of connections, both outdegrees (i.e. number of referrals made to external organisations) and indegrees (i.e. number of incoming referrals), not the number of nodes to which the actor is connected. Outdegree and indegree measures, as the names suggest, are directional measures of evaluating a flow of resources (Nicaise et al., 2013). Whilst outdegrees refer to the number of connections an actor makes to the outside, indegrees refer to the number of incoming connections. Thus, these measures

<sup>43</sup> This information has been extracted from the questionnaires or from the official websites of the organisations

<sup>44</sup> DEEAP refers to “Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project” and CONNECT refers to “Community Outreach Neighbourhood Networkers Encouraging Change Team”. Due to the length of these names, the following tables will only refer to acronyms.

can be incredibly valuable in establishing how an organisation operates. For instance, Table 6.3 shows that the Council Advice Services (CAS) have a degree value of 41, meaning that the total number of organisations they receive referrals from and make referrals to adds up to 41. The tables in the following paragraphs will demonstrate that CAS has an outdegree value of 25 (see Table 6.4) and an indegree value of 16 (see Table 6.5), adding up to 41. This does not signify that CAS are linked to 41 different organisations, but that the total number of connections that exist between CAS and linked organisations add up to 41. Degree-centrality is an analytical value based solely on the number of connections held by an element within Social Network Analysis. Degree centrality can help to identify key figures within a network, i.e. figures with the most connections, who can rapidly transmit resources or information to the network as a whole. The organisations listed in Table 6.3 have been listed and ranked by their degree-centrality, essentially listing them by the amount of connections they have to other organisations. It is significant to note that the three most well-connected organisations are council-run, despite only one of the organisations having taken part in this survey. This indicates that a large number of respondents had listed their connections to these services. The Third Sector organisation that is listed in this table (#4) had close links to public bodies and was funded through public money. This indicates a clear advantage of a link to the public sector to becoming an influential figure within the service network.

**Table 6.4** Ranking of services within the SNA by outdegree value

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>Label</i>   | <i>Type of support offered</i>   | <i>Outdegree Value</i> |
|-------------|--|--|------------------------|
| #1          | Council Advice Services (DEEAP, Welfare Rights, CONNECT)                           | Advice and assistance with money advice, debts, benefits, energy advice and more | 25                     |
| #2          | Dundee City Council Social Work team (First Contact and Child Protective Services) | Referrals and assessments  | 17                     |
| #3          | MAXwell Centre   | Empowerment and community support  | 12                     |
| #4          | DEAP (Employment and Aftercare)  | Employability training, life skills, advocacy, etc.                              | 12                     |
| #5          | New Pathways CIC   | Housing support and accommodation, homeless service                              | 10                     |

The analysis of degree measures may be useful in understanding total connections of organisations; however, its two subdivisions may be more useful in identifying the actual organisational types, or at least to understanding how services operate. Utilising the outdegree value measure is a useful tool to identify organisations that are advisers. All organisations in Table 6.4 are either exclusively referral agencies or offer support and advice as part of their services. This indicates that these types of organisations are most likely to refer service users to other organisations. Those with higher numbers of outdegrees inevitably have more power over the success of other organisations (Nicaise et al., 2013), as they determine which organisations are most worthy of receiving a referral. Whilst a high number of outdegrees could also indicate the reliance of an organisation on others, it demonstrates a great knowledge of a wide range of organisations available to service users. Again, Table 6.4 demonstrates the significantly higher numbers of outdegree values of the two organisations run by the local council, signifying higher connectedness of statutory services. High levels of connectedness are framed by Nicaise et al. (2013) as attributes of powerful actors within a social network.

**Table 6.5** Ranking of services within the SNA by indegree value

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>Label</i>   | <i>Type of support offered</i>   | <i>Indegree Value</i> |
|-------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| #1          | Youth-Link Dundee  | Offer befriending services to under-18s  | 17                    |
| #2          | Council Advice Services (DEEAP, Welfare Rights, CONNECT) | Advice and assistance with money advice, debts, benefits, energy advice and more | 16                    |
| #3          | MAXwell Centre   | Empowerment and community support  | 11                    |
| #4          | New Pathways CIC   | Housing support and accommodation, homeless service                              | 11                    |
| #5          | Cairn Centre   | Supporting vulnerable young people   | 10                    |

As implied earlier, the level of indegree values refers to the number of organisations from which a service receives referrals. This could indicate a high level of trustworthiness and reliability within the network (Nicaise et al., 2013). For instance, Table 6.5 demonstrates that Youth-Link Dundee receives referrals from at least 17 organisations in Dundee but makes no outgoing referrals (this latter point is derived from the data and not demonstrated within the tables). This could indicate that this is a ‘final destination’ organisation, i.e. an organisation in which service users find the necessary support that they require or that is not available elsewhere. Some of the expected key players, such as the Council Advice Services and Dundee City Council Social Work team, have a high number of both outdegree and indegree values. This indicates that these organisations are very influential and have a lot of power within the network, as they are not only frequently utilised as a point of contact, but also have a large network of organisations to refer service users to. They could be interpreted as gateways. They provide temporary advice and support, but they also have a large reach in the network, which is valuable to providing the individual with suitable specialist support.

**Table 6.6** Ranking of services within the SNA by betweenness value

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>Label</i>   | <i>Type of support offered</i>   | <i>Betweenness Value</i> |
|-------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| #1          | Council Advice Services (DEEAP, Welfare Rights, CONNECT)                           | Advice and assistance with money advice, debts, benefits, energy advice and more | 0.144                    |
| #2          | Dundee City Council Social Work team (First Contact and Child Protective Services) | Referrals and assessments  | 0.084                    |
| #3          | New Pathways CIC   | Housing support and accommodation, homeless service                              | 0.075                    |
| #4          | MAXwell Centre   | Empowerment and community support  | 0.067                    |
| #5          | DEAP (Employment and Aftercare)  | Employability training, life skills, advocacy, etc.                              | 0.056                    |

Betweenness centrality in a Social Network Analysis indicates the influence of an actor within a network based on their capability to transmit information to one another (Freeman, 1977). The algorithm used to calculate it measures the shortest paths between actors within a network, identifying those who commonly fall on such paths. In this case, it would indicate the capability to share either information or resources with the wider network. However, it is also important to approach this with caution, as calculating the betweenness centrality of a whole network can lead to misleading results. They can show actors that have authority over or control the communication between organisations (Borgatti et al., 2009), as may be the case in the results in Table 6.6. The Council Advice Services yet again display the highest levels of betweenness-centrality, indicating their ability to transfer and accept service users from a wide range of organisations in Dundee.

**Table 6.7** Ranking of services within the SNA by closeness value

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>Label</i>   | <i>Type of support offered</i>   | <i>Closeness Value</i> |
|-------------|--|--|------------------------|
| #1          | Council Advice Services (DEEAP, Welfare Rights, CONNECT)                           | Advice and assistance with money advice, debts, benefits, energy advice and more | 0.398                  |
| #2          | Dundee City Council Social Work team (First Contact and Child Protective Services) | Referrals and assessments  | 0.372                  |
| #3          | MAXwell Centre   | Empowerment and community support  | 0.311                  |
| #4          | DEAP (Employment and Aftercare)  | Employability training, life skills, advocacy, etc.                              | 0.302                  |
| #5          | New Pathways CIC   | Housing support and accommodation, homeless service                              | 0.298                  |

Closeness centrality is a measure similar to betweenness centrality, in that it also measures the shortest paths within a network, but assigns a value based on the total “shortest paths” the node lies on. So, whilst betweenness centrality determines how likely it is that two nodes within a network are connected by the actor, closeness centrality quantifies the average distance of the actor to other nodes. Both can demonstrate high levels of connectedness, but closeness centrality is more likely to identify an actor that can directly influence the larger network or pass information to everyone quickly, whereas betweenness demonstrates the ability to influence resource flow within a network, whilst not necessarily having the most direct connections (Freeman, 1977). Following the information provided throughout this section, it does not come as a surprise that the Council Advice Services also score highest in closeness centrality (see Table 6.7). This further demonstrates the ability of these services not only to influence how referrals are made, but also have access to a greater range of organisations than other actors within the network.

From the data provided by the questionnaire and the SNA, the organisations have been divided into three organisational types, based on their referral style:



- **First contact organisations:** Organisations to whom first contact service users turn directly. This is the least common organisational type. They usually solely provide immediate emergency support, such as financial aids or food parcels, or are well known contact points. Whilst not mentioned in the tables above, the Tayside Police is an example of a First Contact organisation. They refer many individuals to other organisations, but do not receive any incoming referrals, likely as individuals will contact the Police independently.
- **Gateway organisations:** Organisations which receive a lot of referrals but also refer to many other organisations. Generally, this refers to organisations with a lot of power and reach. They may provide some support themselves, but also have the ability to transfer the service user to a host of other organisations. This is the most common type of organisation, as even organisations who do not specifically consider themselves a referral agency refer service users to a host of organisations. Note that being a gateway organisation does by no means indicate that the support provided by that organisation is not sufficient to the needs of the service users, but it generally only provides temporary support or advice. It has the knowledge to transfer service users to more specialist services. The Council Advice Services and the MAXwell Centre are examples of this.
- **“Final destinations”:** This refers to organisations which have a high number of incoming referrals. This may not necessarily indicate long-term service relationships but indicates fulfilling a final need. These generally consisted of organisations that provided a social element, once their immediate need was fulfilled. Youth-Link, which offers a befriending service for under 18s, is an example of this. Whilst not mentioned in the tables above, the Dundee Foodbank was another organisation which had a significantly higher number of incoming referrals than outgoing. Individuals who accessed this service were likely only expecting to access food and other supplies, rather than any continuous support.

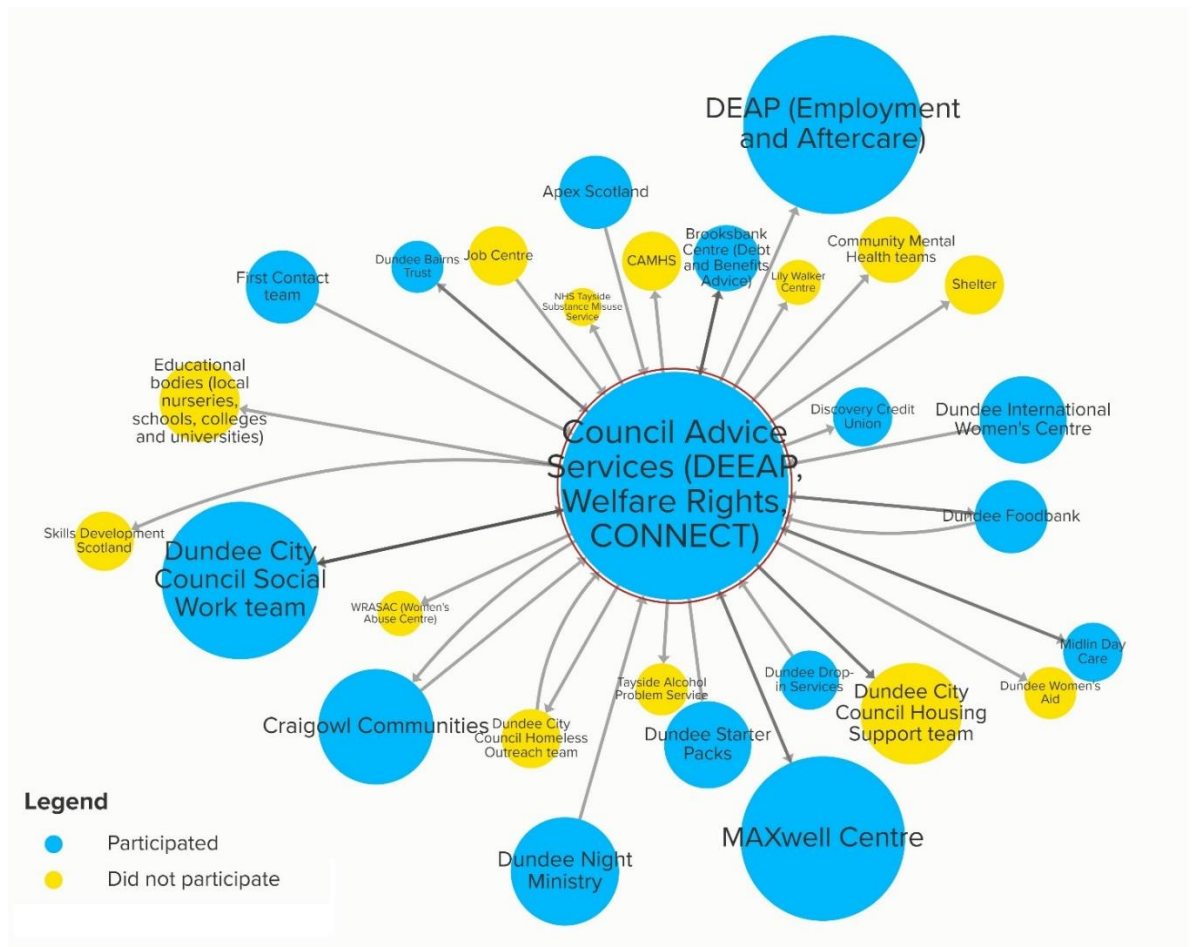
Three case studies have been selected to demonstrate how networks have been built between organisations in Dundee City.



**Figure 6.3** Direct network of Eighteen and Under<sup>45</sup>

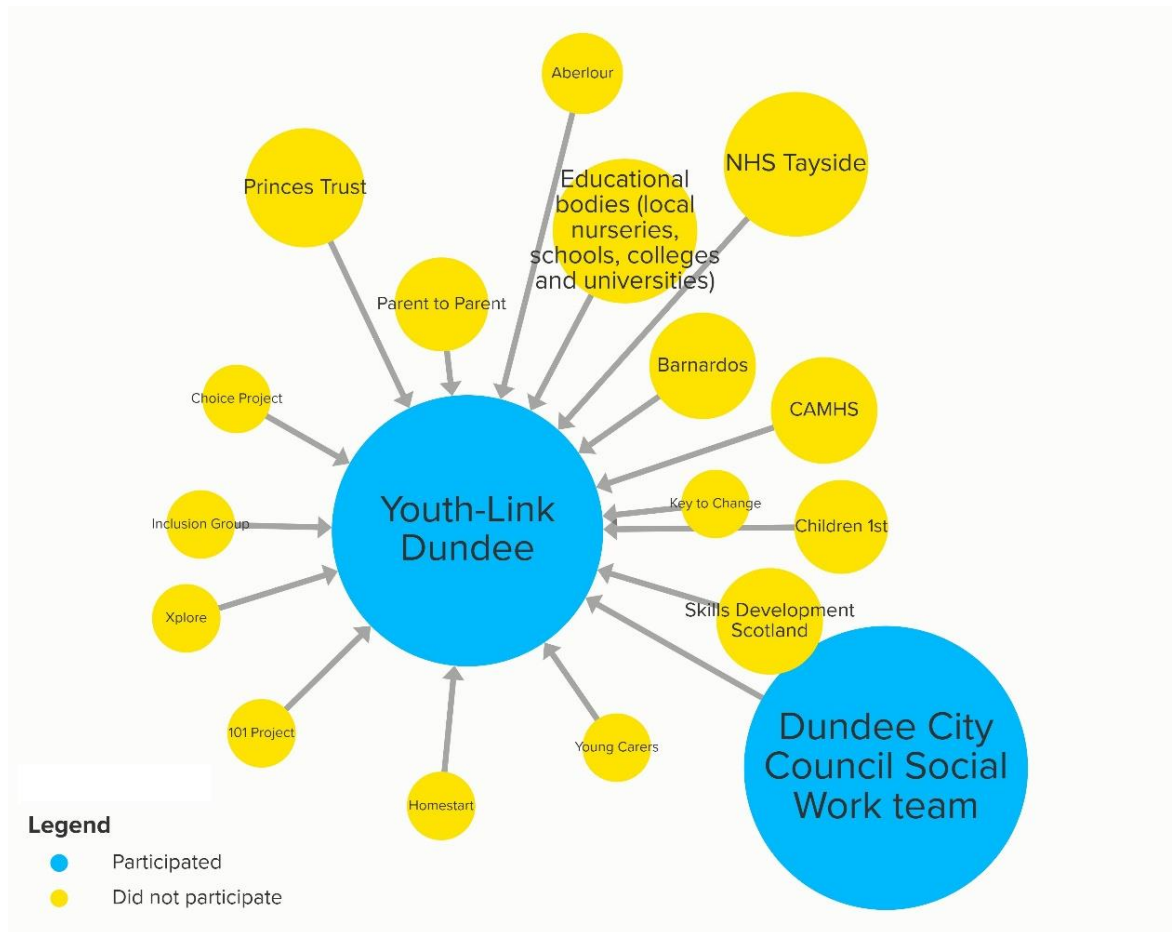
Figure 6.3 visualises the network created by the Eighteen and Under. The organisation only accepts self-referrals, which means that it has no indegrees. This makes it a prime example of a first contact organisation. The organisational aim of the group is to provide “confidential support for abused young people”, as taken from the survey response. It provides the one-to-one support it can at the premises, and then refers users onto specialist services or gateway organisations, such as the Dundee City Council Housing Support team. It also lists authoritative bodies such as the NHS or the Police, which may have to be contacted to report the cases of abuse or for the service users to receive medical care.

<sup>45</sup> The size of the elements in Figures 6.1-6.3 indicates betweenness centrality, calculated in comparison with the other actors in this cluster.



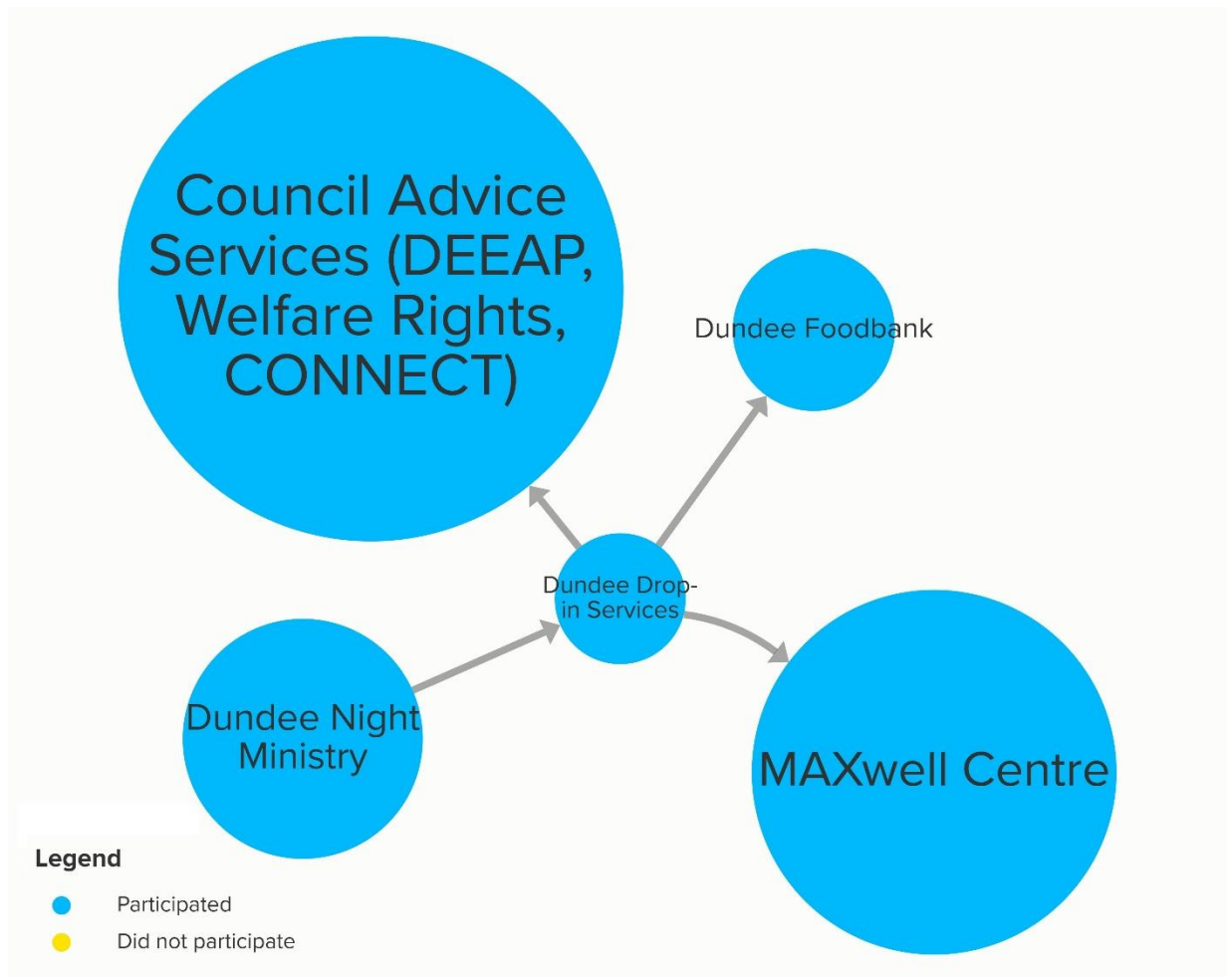
**Figure 6.4** Direct network of the Council Advice Services

To demonstrate a case study for a gateway organisation, this study chose to use the Council Advice Services (see Figure 6.4). Whilst the term encapsulates a few different organisations, the Advice Services themselves responded to the survey as a unified organisation and other survey respondents who mentioned them in the answers on referrals also referred to them as a unified body. These services were used as a case study as they have the highest number of degrees (i.e. combined number of in- and outdegrees) and are thus the most well-known organisation in this study. The Council Advice Services are also the perfect embodiment of a gateway organisation, as they not only provide immediate advice on welfare and debt, but they can assist service users by referring them to appropriate organisations for further support, which is enabled through their great reach.



**Figure 6.5** Network of Youth-Link Dundee

Figure 6.5 is the best example available in the network which is a ‘final destination’. It has a total of 17 indegrees, but no outdegrees. The visualisation of this demonstrates from how many organisations it receives referrals. Interestingly, Youth-Link has a similar organisational aim to Eighteen and Under (Figure 6.3). The organisational aim as stated is “to offer One-to-One Befriending to children 5-18”. The difference here is that Eighteen and Under provides specialist care for children who have suffered from abuse, which means that in some cases, other specialist services have to be contacted for further care, and in the case of Youth-Link, the end goal is to provide support for children or teenagers through a befriending service. This would not be suitable for cases of abuse, in which the children would need specialist care from a professional. Whilst these kinds of organisations have not been the focus of this research, they offer a great insight into the methods in which service users access services in different scenarios.



**Figure 6.6** Network of drop-in services

This research chose to present one more example of a cluster, which is not necessarily a prime example of the classifications named above (see Figure 6.6). The Dundee Drop-In Services are already comprised of multiple organisations, such as the Eagles Wing's Trust (a soup kitchen and drop-in centre), St. Salvador's (a church which provides a food bank once a week) and Taught by Muhammed (a soup kitchen and advice service). The drop-in centres collaborate only with four other organisations. The Council Advice Services, as they assist individuals with specialist advice and support on welfare-related issues, and three other smaller charities: the Dundee Night Ministry (a soup kitchen<sup>46</sup>), the local foodbank, and the MAXwell Centre (a community centre with a focus of empowering individuals in poverty). This cluster is representative of a quote by one of the social workers, who claimed a preference of charities to work with one another towards a similar goal, rather than work with larger

<sup>46</sup> This is mentioned as a part of the drop-in services on the leaflet but was not mentioned by the survey respondent.

organisations solely because of their resources. A worker from a small Third Sector organisation which collaborates with other similar organisations in the city, stated the following about their cooperation.

The drop-ins are really working together and it's really good that the collaboration is there without the competition, you know?

The efficacy of partnership working is clearly demonstrable through some of the participant and support worker statements. The referral process has become much simpler and the participants report having access to beneficial organisations they previously had no knowledge of.

On an operational basis, it becomes clear that partnership working, in the sense that it is being advocated for by the Council, has its benefits. Particularly those with a lot of power, such as the referral agencies instated by the Council, can connect service users and even be a connector for organisations themselves, which is beneficial to organisations with low resources. However, partnership working policies are not always welcomed by organisations. Some see it as an expression of power imbalances within the network. This is particularly valid for smaller organisations that have been functioning as part of an unofficial partnership on a long-term basis. These organisations do not rely so much on funding as they are powered by donations and volunteer-work. It is important to note again that this analysis would have been most effective if all organisations had participated, which due to the dynamic nature of the sector would require a large amount of resources and a high level of reach, if at all possible.

This analysis shows that there are evident key players within the network, mainly within the public sector who have reach to a multitude of organisations. Other smaller organisations on the other hand only interact with other organisations with a similar organisational aim. At first glance this may be interpreted as a lack of power and reach, but, as the quote by support worker above demonstrates, that this may be intentional. The following section will look at how effective partnership working was viewed to be through the findings of the interviews with service staff and managers.

### 6.4.3 Effectiveness of partnership working for operational efficacy

#### 6.4.3.1 Views of staff and managers

The SNA demonstrated that public sector organisations are key figures within the wider service network. They have the advantage of a constant funding stream through public money (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014). Those who were closely linked to public authorities were the first to implement policy-led changes. Levitt (2012) found that this could increase regulations, making it more difficult for Third Sector organisations who have recently secured public funding to carry out services as they had previously done. This section will discuss how frontline staff and managers viewed partnership working. It will differentiate between the views of workers from public and Third Sector organisations.

A public sector worker talked about transferring to their current position from another public service team.

I came from another team in the council and I find working here a lot more rewarding. Not just because I feel that I help people more, but I find the working atmosphere a lot more regulated. Maybe it's also because of the structural changes which have happened, but things are definitely a bit more organised here. I think that the partnership working has really helped us, because we've been able to become a bit more specialised in what we do and we're not so much stuck on trying to solve a whole bunch of issues. A lot of the people that come in, especially for welfare support, they'll face a range of complex issues that we can't necessarily help them with. But we can definitely point them in the right direction.

Some indication of partnership working existed across all sectors. This is most prevalent in the public sector, likely because they are advocates of partnership strategies. Therefore, they are leading by example. There was a clear difference in the perceived influence of partnership working between public and Third Sector workers. Public sector workers reported the effect of official partnership working through the integration of policy into everyday operations, meaning that their operations were less flexible, and workers had to adhere to more stringent guidelines. Third Sector workers reported a more casual approach to partnership working through unofficial referrals between each other.

Whilst collaborative efforts seemed to be on the rise, workers from smaller voluntary organisations did not feel like they were included in an official partnership. They reported a sense of stronger connections with each other but did not feel like equal partners with the larger, more structured bodies in the city. Unfortunately, these findings do not offer explicit information about resource exchange as a whole between public and Third Sector. From these findings, however, we could deduct the following. For those affiliated with publicly funded services, a steady flow of both monetary resources and service users was prevalent. How this lack of funding impacted service users was discussed in Section 6.3.2. The following section will focus on how service users perceived partnership working.

#### 6.4.3.2 How partnership working was viewed by service users

The perception of partnership working by service users is of great importance to this research, as it demonstrates the efficacy of the strategy to those who rely on the services. Many participants referred to the effects of partnership working, whilst few were aware of the actual procedures behind it. Michael demonstrated the greatest awareness of partnership working, but he stated that he felt as though interorganisational collaboration was lacking in efficacy. Michael's previous experiences were demonstrative of the need for a heightened cooperation between services in Dundee.

And I had some quite bad experiences, especially with the [specialist support] organisations, where I was with one organisation, and they referred and referred and referred, didn't seem to work with each other, and it actually made me quite unwell at one point. And that's when I was in Dundee, and I was like, woah woah woah, this is gonna run me down at the moment.

He then referred to his desire for organisations to be more centralised and communicative.

I'm really pleased that non-statutory services exist, absolutely, because the authorities are completely overloaded [...] and I'm glad it's cutting them slack, but my main concern is that it's too disparate. There's like 2000 veteran's organisations at the moment. I wish they were all a little more under one umbrella. All regulated, all under a central umbrella. Not quite sure that's happened yet.



In response to the researcher asking whether he had heard of any such projects in Dundee, he responded as follows.

They are thinking of a centralised point and then they can signpost you. Absolutely I think that would be helpful. I do, but I'm not sure that's happening yet.

Abigail took part in a pilot project which provided a centralised advice service with a great knowledge of the service network and the services they provided locally. This was aimed at referring individuals to services which could help them with a specific issue.

This isn't city-wide and I think it should be city-wide. There are only two or three surgeries in the city which actually does this. For me, in my circumstances, it helped massively, because I then came across a lovely worker [...]. [The worker] helped me and supported me. She then did a fantastic job. She was just a nice person to speak to. She went that extra mile for me, on my behalf. She then linked me up with numerous services. Some of them admittedly worked, some of them didn't. That doesn't mean to say that all services will work.

Abigail's quote here highlights that it is not just the knowledge of local services that made the service so useful to her, but that continuity of care is vital to how she engaged with the service. The continuity she received, and the worker's positive approach allowed Abigail to establish a relationship with the worker and engage with the services she referred her onto. Many of the local community groups, through which some of the participants were recruited and with which service users had already established a trusting relationship, were in partnership with financial advice groups. This was reported by many of the service users as being of great benefit. A funding contract with the local government can be an important driver to the survival or thriving of small support organisations, as the competitive nature of external funding bodies can make them extremely difficult to receive the financial resources to conduct their support services adequately (Zimmer and Pahl, 2018). Again, the actual partnership per se was not mentioned, but the service users referred to the ease of access to the support through their community group. Sam spoke about how he was referred to an advice service to support him with the issue he experienced when he had saved too much of his benefits (see Section 5.6.1).

They had referred me to the [financial advice service] dead quick, who were good cause they came up here, too. And I never knew, with the [advice service] I got a one to one support through the whole thing that I was going through, and then they asked me to make a point with them, and you know what? I always thought that the [financial advice service] was shite. But you know what? They really opened my eyes up. I think different about them now. Work that I've never seen before.

As the support worker was able to come to the community group to attend a meeting, Sam was able to receive a service that he might not have if the partnership wouldn't exist. Sam's story was quite common. Many other participants reported not wanting to seek help from organisations they might associate with statutory bodies, due to the mistrust discussed in Section 5.4.3.3, but they accepted the support out of trust towards their support worker at the community group. This enabled them to seek professional help in a supportive and familiar setting. These stories demonstrate that the referral element of partnership working has particular benefits towards service users, as they are enabled to receive specialist support for a wider range of issues. Some of the preferred elements as mentioned by Petch, Cook and Miller (2013), such as increased coordination and access to a wider range of specialist organisations, are reiterated by the service users. This research would also like to highlight the importance of continuity of care, as trust was deemed to be pertinent to the service users' engagement with a particular service, and agency. Abigail made the following statement on the importance of listening to the service users.

What's the point in still engaging with a service that's not working? You could be doing like a parenting programme as they put me forward for. I don't need them to tell me how to be a parent. I need them to support me in terms of listening to what I've got to say.

She highlights here the importance of person-centred service provision and allowing the service users agency over the choices of services available to them. The importance of including service users in the decision-making processes around the services they access can have significant implications to countering the powerlessness and voicelessness they encounter in other aspects of their lives (Narayan, 2000). The following section will discuss how policymakers described the decision-making processes within existing partnerships in Dundee.

#### 6.4.4 Collaborating and creating common agendas

Creating a common agenda is a key aspect of partnership working, as it creates a focus for establishing mutual targets (Sheehy, 2017). The policies as laid out by the Dundee Partnership were important documents for this thesis as they provided guidelines for partnership working within the city with the goal of reducing levels of poverty and social exclusion locally (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Dundee Partnership, 2016; Dundee Partnership, 2019a). The Dundee Fairness Strategy, which was originally produced by the Dundee Partnership in 2012 with an updated document released in 2016 and a progress report in 2019, provides a range of soft outcomes aiming to shape service provision across sectors within the city. ‘Soft outcomes’, identified as outcomes of a qualitative nature, e.g. the improvement of wellbeing within a locality, have previously been shown to be more effective in providing long-term solutions to inequality (Adam and Green, 2014, p.1526). The following paragraphs will discuss how organisations collaborate in partnership towards a common agenda.

Whilst agendas provide guidelines for services to abide by, policymakers described that contexts and operations need to be established through a strategic plan. A policymaker described their decision-making process as follows.

We would start with the strategic plan, so a strategic plan would look at – like a normal strategic planning process, looking for services, looking for gaps, looking to see what your future modelling would be. Your financial resource, your demographic information, your demand and capacity prediction.

In terms of what has given partnership working focus, local policies or strategies were attributed as having an influence on operational efficacy. A worker from the Third Sector spoke of the influence of the Fairness Strategy on their actions.

I'd say without the Fairness Strategy this partnership would not even have come to being. We've all been doing the same thing for years, but this has centralised it so much and made access a lot easier for people. It was hard for people to find out where they can access support a few years back. Word-of-mouth or finding out by chance was the best bet you had.

This quote highlights that a common agenda was beneficial to enabling higher levels of coordination and cooperation between services through increasing the amount of resources available to those within the network. In addition to the practical benefit,

one of the policymakers who was interviewed for this research highlighted the value of the Fairness Commission in creating a shared philosophy across the sectors.

I think the Fairness Commission is for sure up there on our agenda. It's not a standalone document, it's really integral to the other strategies in the city, homelessness and alcohol and drugs and so on. It's all interlinked and interwoven. I think a lot of the things that the Fairness Commission was highlighting we were already aware of, but I think it's brought policymakers a new focus, which is really good. Where our priorities should lie, and we need to concentrate resources and so on. I think it's been really, really helpful and will continue to be. It's kinda been almost mainstreamed but then service deliveries planned, which is important. There's always a danger really that you have a commission but then it sits on a shelf.

However, they also admitted that the process of implementing policy changes is not as straightforward as it seems.

I suppose a challenge is always how you actually ensure that at every level, getting people around the table, getting people talking in the same room, how you actually ensure that those things are happening on the ground. Something that we need to continually consolidate because there has been so much change. [...] There's always a lot of work to be done in terms of ensuring all people from the organisations are chiming in, you know, team leaders, supervisors, staff on the ground, frontline staff, be it first intake team or officers in housing or whatever. They're making the linkages and coming together in the way that we were just discussing there around individual service users, to ensure that we're providing that holistic service and we're focused on delivering the outcomes as discussed. So I think it's making sure that the policy and strategy is delivering that on the ground and making a difference for people on the ground and improving life chances.

This quote highlights that whilst policy may provide guidelines which are in line with evidence-based suggestions for good practice, in reality, implementing recommendations can be hindered through practical issues. The interviewee pays particular attention to the practical issues surrounding partnership working, such as finding meeting times and locations which are suitable for all members. They then move on to the strategy's potential for improvement.

But there is no room for complacency, and we need to look at how we can develop things on the ground and how we actually move the services forward in a person-

centred way. I think it's really good to get that overview. It's good to see structures and it's always a journey that can be changed.

Another policymaker highlighted the value of having guidelines such as the Fairness Strategy as it provides a focus and set targets to work towards.

Everything the Fairness Commission has done has fed into [our smaller] partnership, so the Dundee Health and Social Care partnership is active within [this specialised] partnership. A lot of direction for us, in terms of development, comes from the Fairness Commission. It's something we are working to. One of the sections in our strategic plan is a section on inequalities, and a section on prevention to all the inequality that goes on. For example, we've used some of our funding to put people [who give welfare advice] in GP practices. Obviously, we do equality training and things like that as well. We're looking at rolling out new projects looking at health inequality, so we've used short-term funding to actual fund services which help with that, like mental health etc. So, we're actually being quite proactive, as we're actually financially supporting services as well as delivering them, so we're contributing to the Fairness Strategy. A lot of work goes into delivering the services long-term and trying to make it part of our agenda.

These experiences demonstrate that partnership working introduces an innovative approach to improving the management of services through multi-organisational collaboration. Workers within the sector seem to view partnership working as a positive element towards reaching goals of supporting service users. However, even the most vocal proponents of partnership working recognise that external impacts coming from a national level are difficult to combat through even the best intentions. The following quote from a policymaker expresses concerns about the implementation of Universal Credit, which had not yet been completed during that point in time.

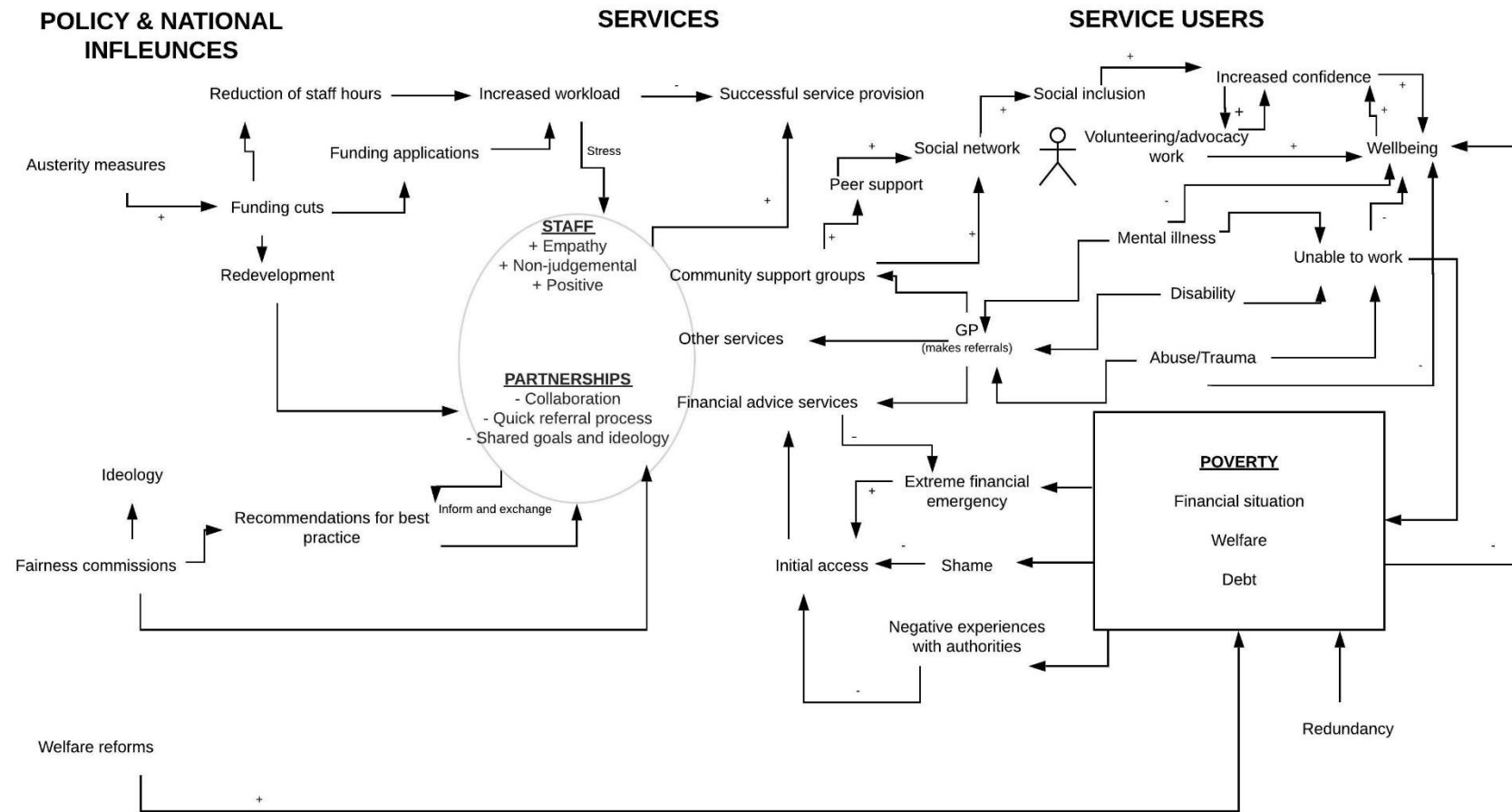
It's picking up from the Fairness Commission, you know, the similarities with a lot of strategies, working with service users across the ground, to actually then make that happen, to improve services for people and improve outcomes for people and ultimately, I suppose to tackle the real disadvantage in the city, the exclusion and poverty and deprivation, poor life chances, etc, etc. On average two kids a week in Dundee are taken into care. No doubt you'll be aware of the high levels of the good work of the Fairness Commission and also the high levels of deprivation in the city. None of which is gonna be helped with the ongoing benefit changes as well. People who are already in a hard place financially are gonna be adversely impacted as the

welfare benefit rollout continues. The full rollout of Universal Credit is yet to happen. We're anticipating that that's gonna have yet another massive implication for the city and the people here too. I suppose that's kinda an interlinked picture, which is quite complex.

National legislative forces, such as the impact of austerity measures on service provision (as detailed in Section 6.3.2) or the effects that the welfare reforms had on levels of inequality (as detailed in Section 5.6), can be detrimental towards the wellbeing of a community. This is an example of the failings of neoliberal governance in practice. Communities are held responsible for their fate whilst being subjected to external forces over which they have no control, linking to Foucault's critique of governmentality (1978). How these effects interlink with the entirety of the findings as detailed over the course of the past two chapters will be surmised in a comprehensive systems map in the following section.

## 6.5 Systems map

From the data that has been collated through the interviews and the SNA, this section collates the information into a systems map (see Figure 6.7 on the next page). The aim of this is to provide a holistic overview of all components of the service structure and, most importantly, how they are all interlinked. This could have the benefit of identifying causes and effects that previously were not visible and could give a novel insight to improving service provision. This section will give an overview of how this map was structured, the relations it demonstrates to one another, and what implications this has for the research.



**Figure 6.7** Systems map

The development of a concept map has been loosely based on the mess maps as provided by Horn and Weber (2007) (Section 4.6.3). Mess maps are a qualitative approach to systems thinking as a method to introduce a political or institutional change within a sector. Horn and Weber (2007) suggest applying a focus group from participants of different sectors to gain insight into the functioning of different levels of a network. In this case, the researcher has collated the opinions of individuals from different levels and sectors independently as a focus group would have compromised the anonymity of the individuals.

The layout was created to provide a logical overview of how these findings could be structured. The service user lies relatively central as all forces that drive service provision eventually lead to and affect those who access the services. At the top, overarching external influences, such as austerity measures and national guidelines indicate forces that strongly influence service provision but are out of the local network's reach. As the map reveals, service provision is affected by many influences. Some external factors influence the needs of individuals and how services must adapt to these. For instance, austerity measures lead to funding cuts, which results in higher workloads for staff through an increase in funding applications and cuts to the workforce. The higher stress levels faced by staff could lead to less effective service provision, which would ultimately affect the service user. At the bottom of the map lies an external factor which highly impacts the service users need for services: welfare reforms. As discussed in Section 5.6 of the previous chapter, the welfare reforms greatly contributed to the financial needs of individuals as transitions and cuts left them with less money. This, in turn, heightened the psychological effects of poverty, such as shame, but also contributed to financial crises, which led individuals to seeking advice from financial advice services. These financial advice services were a first access point for many individuals, which opened the doors to a wider range of services. This was made possible through collaboration with these organisations through referral-based partnerships (Section 6.4).

The diagram also demonstrates a significant concept, which has only been vaguely introduced in this chapter. Individuals first sought access for emergency financial support, or were under statutory care through social work, medical services or penitentiaries. However, long-term effects on wellbeing, which ultimately stimulated community engagement, were driven by what this research classified as community



organisations (e.g. community centres, peer support groups, community cafes/food banks). Within these organisations, individuals developed networks of solidarity and support, which in most cases resulted in the individuals giving back to their communities through volunteering and advocacy work, sometimes even gaining paid employment within the organisations at hand. Chapter 7 will focus on these organisations in great detail and demonstrate how these findings offer new theoretical perspectives on how individuals considered to be in power build social capital and take back power through solidarity with one another.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that services are most effective when continuity of care allows for the creation of a trusting relationship. However, there are barriers in place which can hinder effective service provision. Most pertinently, the lack of funding experienced available to services, as well as the competitive nature of funding applications, was detrimental to the functioning of effective service provision. Whilst partnership working aimed at overcoming some of the barriers posed by the lack of funding, there were discrepancies in the types of partnerships and the involvement in partnerships, which meant that organisations received different benefits or faced different disadvantages, depending on whom they collaborated with. The following paragraph will discuss this point in more detail.

In terms of the effectiveness of partnership working, it is the connections that organisations have built with one another that have allowed for more coordinated service provision and a greater variety of services working cooperatively towards a common goal. Overall, the concept of partnership working was praised highly by those working within the sector and those who create policies (see Section 6.4). Particularly the effects of having a shared agenda, such as the Fairness Strategy (Dundee Partnership, 2012), and exchanging knowledge were viewed as being positive effects of partnership working. Whilst the term “partnership working” itself was barely used by service users, as they were generally unfamiliar with the term, they were in some cases aware of some elements of partnership working, such as the higher coordination of services and an ease of access to a wide range of organisations, which coincides with the findings made by Petch, Cook and Miller (2013). Some had experienced lengthy referral processes, whilst others had experienced effective referrals within

more established partnerships (see Section 6.4.3.2). This demonstrates that establishing more coordinated partnerships could help to overcome the difficulties faced by lengthy referrals.

However, despite the reported benefits of partnership working, there were significant shortcomings which should be highlighted. Social Network Analysis has demonstrated that certain key actors within the network have a much further reach over the network than others, signifying higher power within the network (see Section 6.4.2). As these organisations were public bodies, they were more established than smaller actors and had a constant income stream, which smaller organisations did not have (see Section 6.3.2). Previous research has highlighted the concerns about the dominance of more established, public bodies in the provision of services, as it can streamline services to fit the status quo, rather than providing innovative solutions to tackling social issues (Lindsay, Osborne and Bond, 2014; Sinclair et al., 2018). The following chapter (Chapter 7) will add to this discussion, as the organisations which benefited individuals most in the long-term were organisations which generally struggled to secure funding and offered alternative approaches to supporting individuals in need. This highlights the need for a reconsideration of the way in which services are provided. The following chapter will discuss how individuals built support networks within what is to be defined as ‘hidden communities’.

## 7 Hidden Communities

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw upon some of the findings mentioned in the previous two chapters and present an element of this research which became the most prominent discovery upon analysis. The most revealing finding to come from this study is the ‘hidden communities’ that individuals have built resulting from having to seek support during one of the most difficult periods of their lives. It became clear to the researcher that individuals had built support networks of peers within organisations they attended for a variety of reasons. Due to the novelty of these findings and the fact that these communities seem hidden from policies, outlining these findings in a separate chapter was warranted. This chapter will introduce the definition of community groups in this research and which individuals were categorised as accessing this type of support (Section 7.2). It will then examine the social lives of the individuals prior to accessing these services as this was a determining factor how access was established, and engagement was maintained (Section 7.3). This will be followed by an evaluation of relationships that individuals built within the networks (Section 7.4), the wider effects these networks have had on the individuals’ lives (Section 7.5) and how boundaries are blurred between service users and volunteers (Section 7.6). The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the participants who were not part of the hidden communities and some thoughts on the reasoning behind the differences in service access (Section 7.7). The following section will detail how this research conceptualised hidden communities.

### 7.2 What are “hidden communities”?

This research sought to investigate the effects of financial inclusion services and their cooperation through partnership initiatives on the lives of those accessing the services. For many participants, these financial inclusion services (such as welfare, energy or debt advice services) were first contact services and were accessed during times of severe financial difficulties. Some participants with specific needs, such as mental illness or substance use issues, initially accessed medical services or were involved with the criminal justice system. Through contact with these organisations, they were made aware of the other services available to them in the City, which led to the initial access of the services discussed in this chapter. This is a particularly vital finding, as

it demonstrates that partnership working and creating successful referrals can have a significant long-term effect on individuals. The emergency support provided by financial inclusion organisations was vital in securing basic financial stability and providing basic needs such as food and electricity, whilst some of the organisations the individuals were referred onto provided ongoing and long-term support. It is important to note again that not all participants of this study were involved in these communities or had accessed services which provided them with this type of continuous care. The backgrounds and circumstances of these individuals will be discussed in Section 7.7 to identify circumstantial differences and structural barriers which may hinder the individuals from accessing wider support networks. Out of the 23 participants of this study, 14 individuals had reported building networks of peers within the organisations they attended<sup>47</sup>. The types of services this research categorised as being hubs for these communities include the following:

- Soup kitchens,
- Church-led food banks,
- Mental health or addiction support groups,
- Community centres,
- Hobby groups, as part of a wider support organisation (e.g. mental health, trauma support).

For some of these organisations, such as the soup kitchens and food banks, tackling the effects of poverty was a central aim. Other organisations recognised that poverty was one of multiple drivers for creating the need for the service, but they did not necessarily advocate this as an organisational aim. For instance, some organisations, such as the specific mental health or addiction support groups, were not targeted specifically at individuals in poverty, but mainly consisted of individuals from these backgrounds. Thus, they provided the social environments for individuals with multiple shared experiences to connect with one another. This chapter will elaborate on how these effects were achieved.

Increasing social inclusion plays a major role in policy which aims to tackle poverty (Islington Fairness Commission, 2011; Dundee Fairness Commission, 2016).

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<sup>47</sup> Nine participants were only minimally engaged with services at the point of the interviews. Section 7.7 will focus on these individuals in more detail.

However, the questions of how to increase social capital and tackle social exclusion through policy intervention remains a largely debated topic. Many of the individuals taking part in this study could have been considered to have complex needs, at least at the beginning of their journey to accessing support. The term ‘complex needs’ does not signify the amount of support an individual requires, but rather it refers to the method in which the needs are to be met. Communication and trust issues or difficulties building relationships, often as a result of trauma, can act as barriers to individuals seeking the support they could benefit from (Balda, 2016). These trust issues were evidenced through the lack of institutional trust exhibited by the participants as a result of experiences of power disparities between the individuals and the Government (see Section 5.4.3.3). Pierson (2002) suggested partnership working as a way of providing the holistic service provision required to engage with individuals who are reasonably apprehensive of engaging with services. As discussed previously in Section 6.2.1, most participants were long-term service users during the time of the interviews, but they started their journeys being reluctant to engage with services due to being mistrustful of them. Individuals are far more likely to engage willingly with a service that is very familiar to them, and/or consists of individuals who were likely to empathise with their circumstances. For many participants, being highly engaged with a local organisation meant more than just being a client or service user. The levels of familiarity with a service were congruent with feeling accepted and involved as part of a small community. For some, this even led to more active forms of engagement. Ten participants worked as volunteers in organisations as a result of having been a client. Two were employed directly through the services they attended whilst others benefitted more widely from the connections they had built within the groups. Sections 7.4 and 7.5 will demonstrate how participants benefited from creating a support network of peers and volunteer workers to help improve their circumstances.

Traditional theories of social capital state that individuals living in poverty lack social capital. Linking capital, which refers to relationships built across demographic groups (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004), has previously been found to be particularly lacking for individuals living in poverty. This is seen as problematic because linking capital has been linked to being a useful access point for employment and housing opportunities (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Previous research has argued against policy being able to impact social capital (Agger and Jensen, 2015; Wacquant, 2008a).

The evidence presented in this research however demonstrates that people who have become severely isolated or excluded from society have found new ways to reconnect to their neighbourhoods. Services which provide a community atmosphere have allowed individuals with similar issues to connect with one another, thereby building social capital. The buildings have offered a physical space to connect with people struggling with issues such as homelessness, severe poverty, and mental illness. The reason this research identifies these communities as being ‘hidden’, despite the communities existing in plain sight, is that these communities are not recognised by previous theories on social capital. Bourdieu’s (1986) theory on cultural capital highlights a shared collective identity between individuals from similar cultural backgrounds and shared experiences, which can create a sense of solidarity, but it does account for these newly established networks which are driven by altruistic and selfless reciprocity and a collective antagonistic stance towards the ruling classes. His theory likewise ranks cultural capital on a hierarchical scale, rating cultural capital by social status (i.e. cultural capital of the higher economic classes provides higher overall benefits to the individual in society). These findings offer an alternate explanation to understanding social capital, as it is not defined by individual benefit, but rather by the collective sense of solidarity. Even when individuals could be seen to have benefitted individually from these communities, such as gaining paid employment or voluntary positions, the motivations to participate in these positions was driven mainly by altruism and ‘wanting to give back’ rather than by the benefit to the individual. Frank, for instance, utilised online forums to spread awareness of the welfare reforms and how to access support for assessments. James participated in advocacy work, defending the rights of those in unemployment (as described in Section 5.7.3). This type of engagement was done in the interest of the collective, with the intent of taking back power from precisely those institutions (i.e. government and public authorities) which were considered to have power over the individuals (Narayan, 2000).

As became apparent from the visits to many of the participating organisations, such as soup kitchens or community support groups, a vibrant social environment was a key factor in the individuals’ attendance. There seemed to be a large social circle of individuals who were supportive of each other in a positive and understanding demeanour. At the end of the interview, the interviewer always followed up with the

question, “Is there anything else you’d like to say?”. Eleven participants explicitly asked for more funding for the organisation they attended as they attributed their recovery to the social network that was built at the organisations they attended, highlighting the perceived significance of these organisations to the service users. This also highlights the point made in the previous paragraph. The capital derived from the organisations is a collective capital, which is far more complex than that framed by Putnam (1995) and Bourdieu (1986), whose theories value social networks by their individual and economic benefit. From the interviews it further became apparent that the social element was particularly relevant for those individuals who otherwise had no means to social contact, i.e. individuals who had been long-term unemployed and had little to no family or friends in Dundee. The following section will provide details on the social lives of the participants prior to accessing these services.

### 7.3 The social lives of the individuals prior to accessing these services

Whilst Chapter 5 has already detailed some of the elements of the lives of the individuals prior to service access, this section will illuminate the social lives that participants were living prior to accessing services. This will give an insight into whether there is a correlation of individuals being isolated prior to service access with creating social connections through the services. Some of the participants of this study did indeed report a typically small support network outside of the services prior to service access. However, many of those who reported being an integral part of these ‘hidden communities’ reported hitting ‘rock bottom’ and becoming severely isolated as a result of this, in some cases losing contact even to close family members. The reasons varied, but most commonly involved addiction, relationship breakdowns, and mental illness. All individuals also experienced a bout of severe poverty prior to accessing any types of services. Severe poverty is in this case characterised by Sen’s (1999) qualitative framework of not being able to afford a basic subsistence, which in this research homelessness or an inability to afford food or other necessities. This section will discuss how this bout of poverty relates to the development of the participants’ social lives.

Policies such as the Dundee Fairness Commission’s *A Fair Way to Go* (2016) and the Islington Fairness Commission (2011) link poverty and social exclusion as being

correlated factors. This study found that the circumstances that drove individuals into extreme poverty was often interlinked with a breakdown of close relationships and consequent isolation. Diana and Olivia were involved in abusive relationships with men who also provided them with drugs. This resulted in the loss of their children and an alienation from the rest of their family. Gordon and James also lost custody of their children when battling addiction. Sam has cut contact to his family as domestic violence at the hand of his father had deteriorated their relationship. Rosie, Ugo and Tina lost contact with their families during bouts of severe mental illness. Penny lost contact to her parents and immediate family when she came out as gay and suffered severe mental illness after breaking up with her long-term partner in adulthood. Lewis lost contact to his family after moving away from home when he turned 18 but did not elaborate the reasons why. Beatrice, whilst not completely isolated, suffered loss of relationships through the bereavements of a close family member. Quinn left school at a very young age as a result of severe learning difficulties, which resulted in him becoming isolated from his peers. As a young adult, he is still under the care of his family. These circumstances demonstrate that the individuals suffered life events which can cause significant trauma as a standalone event, whilst simultaneously battling with a massive loss in income. The recent uprising of 'trauma-informed practice' in policy recognises that individuals who experience homelessness, mental illness and substance use issues are likely to have experienced trauma in childhood or in their adult life, leading to changed behaviour as an adult (e.g. a difficulty to establish trusting relationships) (NHS Scotland, 2017). Whilst trauma-informed practice was not a focal point of this research, it can assist in understanding the initial difficulties in engaging with services.

Many participants were aware of their prior experiences and isolation having an impact on the receptiveness towards others at the service. Upon Sam referring to the organisation he attends as lifesaving, he was asked to elaborate what precisely makes the organisation lifesaving.

Because a lot of people are very isolated and lonely. They've got mental health issues. Some of them might find it very difficult to interact or just to meet other people. But here it gives you a chance to interact with people who have gone through similar things. You know that everyone's been through it, and because everyone's been through it, you find it easier to approach people. Then when you're doing [the



activities here], it's not just about [the activities], you're making a connection. You meet people through here, who you meet outside, then you can help them. I've met a few friends in here now that I've gone on holiday with. We keep in touch and we're really good friends. Then you might meet others that you say "Hi" to in the street and then you go away. I suppose in that way it took away the isolation from being stranded in the house.

Penny also referred to the organisation she attended as lifesaving.

I was so unwell when I first came here. I really don't ever want to be in that state again. When I first came here, I was referred by my mental health nurse. It's really saved my life. I'm sure you'll hear it from a lot of people saying that.

In these and other cases, the term “lifesaving” is not just metaphorical. Participants attributed their attendance to the organisation as preventing them from spiralling further and potentially committing suicide or overdosing, depending on the issue at hand. The quotes also demonstrate that these organisations are indeed necessary for the individuals to build human connection. For Penny and Sam, mental illness was a large contributor to their isolation. For others, circumstances such as relocation, severing ties to family members, and addiction led to isolation. They were excluded from venues such as workplaces, universities and schools, which are key elements to building social capital (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). This ties in with theories on social capital that conclude that individuals who face economic exclusion (i.e. no access to employment) are likely to face social exclusion (i.e. a lack of social connections), as much social interaction is derived from engagement with the economic sphere. In these new settings, social interaction takes place in a sphere in which they do not feel stigmatised. This could negate any feelings of fear and shame experienced by the individuals (Lister, 2015). This research demonstrates that individuals who are socially and economically excluded have found new arenas for building their social networks. The following section will entail how these networks were established.

## 7.4 Building new social networks

Prior to accessing services, participants had experienced severe isolation, breakdown of close relationships, and a significant loss of income, as detailed in the previous section. Because of this, individuals were initially reluctant to engage with other

individuals, including both employees and other service users. Overcoming this reluctance was a slow process, as it involved building new relationships and creating trust, which can be difficult to establish if individuals have experienced trauma (NHS Scotland, 2017). For many of the participants, the friendships created within these organisations had been created over years of attendance. Whilst the friendships were mostly created between service users, in some cases participants recalled being friends with volunteer or support workers. This was more so the case in smaller charities, such as church- or community-run food banks or soup kitchens. The bonds were strengthened by a mutual feeling of understanding each other's struggles and grievances. For instance, James had been attending soup kitchens for years after he lost his job and was made homeless following his struggles with opiate addiction.

So, I go to the soup kitchens for a bit of company, and they people understand us. It just makes it a bit easier.

His friend, Harry, referred James to this project. Harry and James met in a soup kitchen years ago and remained close friends to this day. Harry is a strong advocate of the importance of socialising when struggling financially.

Like I says a ken the boys doon there. Got my mates doon there. Meet up and obviously hae a cup o coffee. Go to [the soup kitchen] on the Sunday and meet up for a cup of coffee, meet up and get a bag of grub. Ken what, it keeps ya... the week in between ya getting paid [...], it keeps ya going.

Harry told his story of creating his first bond at the organisation he attends.

It's just sometimes you struggle cause you're no working and sometimes you dinnae have a lot of food or that. That's when I started going to places like [the soup kitchen] or places like that. Got a cuppa tea and a sandwich and stuff like that, met up with some people. Then I went out one day and I bumped into [one of the volunteers]. I've only been in here for a few months. My flat was just up the road from there. Same landlord, just a different flat. I was speaking to [the volunteer], telling him I was struggling for electricity and all that. And he says, "why you struggling?" I got a lecture from him. "Dinnae do that again. If you're struggling for it come and speak to us".

In the interview, he referred to the volunteer as his friend on multiple occasions.

Got a lot of time for the lads. If I was really struggling, I know they'd help me. They're the kinda lads that wouldn't see anyone starving. If something would happen, I know that I would still have somewhere to go.

He concludes his interview by stating that his friends “are in the same situation” he is and that they help him “get through the week”. The view that peers are a lifeline after coming from a difficult point in life was one that was shared amongst many participants. Quinn reported that he had the chance to meet people whom he would not usually get the chance to meet when he attended his organisation.

This place basically keeps me sane. There's nothing else like this in Dundee, or in Scotland in fact. It's good. You meet people in here as well that you wouldn't meet otherwise. It kinda mixes that kinda thing together. It's not standoffish, it's just natural. You see a lot of good people come and go, but you're glad that you've had the chance to meet them.

Participants reported the importance of making connections with individuals who had shared similar experiences and had come from similar backgrounds. The categorisation of the three different types of social capital as bonding, bridging and linking capital by Coleman (1988) and Szreter and Woolcock (2004) serves as a useful basis for interpreting these and the following findings. Bonding capital refers to relationships between individuals of different backgrounds built on mutual understanding and shared attributes. Generally, these types of connections were favoured by participants. Relationships categorised as bonding capital positively contribute to a sense of belonging (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004), as demonstrated in this study. However, the individuals did not necessarily have close relationships with everyone attending the services. Charles was one of the participants who benefitted more strongly from the connections he built with volunteers and workers than other service users. The connections he built enabled him to become a paid worker within the organisation he attended after he had self-admittedly earned a reputation as a “reliable volunteer”, following an initial engagement as a voluntary worker. His reluctance to engage with other service users was based on his fear of encountering alcohol as a recovering alcoholic. This links to Bryant's (2018) findings on the risk of available drugs in substance use support organisations. On some occasions, other service users were referred to as “scroungers”, Harry referred to some individuals coming and “taking the mick”. This demonstrates that a certain level of mistrust and

stigma towards other peers was still present. This could perhaps be a result of internalised stigma that individuals held towards themselves (Lister, 2015) and project onto others as a result of this. Overall, however, participants reported establishing trust to others and generally feeling more sympathetic to the plight of others in similar circumstances. This demonstrates that trust is a more fluid concept than it is set out in previous theory on trust (Agger and Jensen, 2015).

Social trust has previously been found to be correlated with institutional trust (Mikucka, Sarracino, and Dubrow, 2017). Observations were made which demonstrated an increase in the participants' overall trust towards other individuals. Generally, they also contributed to an increased sense of social trust (i.e. trusting in the integrity of others in a community), but not necessarily of institutional and political trust (i.e. believing that public institutions and governments have the best interest of their citizens at heart). The participants believed in the integrity of local organisations and trusted them to provide them with the support they needed, but they blamed actions by the government, such as austerity measures, welfare reforms, and lack of employment opportunities, for their predicament. Despite the lack of trust in these institutions, these findings demonstrate that social trust within disadvantaged communities can be strengthened through the provision of suitable facilities. These findings bear resemblance to those of Peter Hall (1999), who attributed voluntary organisations as playing a large role in the maintenance of levels of social capital in the UK. However, these findings further those of Hall's (1999), as they signify that these organisations can drive, not just maintain levels of social capital, particularly for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>48</sup>. Hall also attributes these organisations as hotspots for political engagement and democratic action, which is also an element that becomes clear through these findings. Volunteering is a political statement in itself, as individuals are choosing to give their time to a social cause. James, for instance, also actively engaged in local political action by speaking out for the rights of individuals in poverty. Providing these facilities allow individuals to engage in democracy in its purest form and is a steppingstone to collective action and giving back power to the people.

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<sup>48</sup> Hall (1999) also highlighted how the engagement with voluntary organisations can drive social change through civic engagement. This will be discussed in Section 7.6.

## 7.5 Effects of building peer connections

In addition to building a wider network of individuals, individuals reaped further benefits from attending these services. Social capital has been proven to have a range of positive social and psychological effects, such as a higher rate of educational achievement, economic production, and wellbeing (Putnam, 1995, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Participants battling with mental illness or addiction particularly benefitted from having peer support and finding others who were fighting similar battles. However, those whose only commonalities were struggling with the effects of unemployment and poverty also reaped the benefits of connecting with other service users over these experiences. This section will detail the wider benefits individuals reported as resulting from the networks they created within the organisations.

Some participants did not solely make friends through attending the services, but also attended hobby groups at the organisations, such as music, art or gardening groups, to strengthen the bonds they had created with other individuals. This had the benefit of giving the individuals an activity to practice or learn about during times when they were not at the organisations. Many of the participants reported having taken part in groups, but those who particularly benefited were Beatrice, Frank, Quinn, Rosie and Tina. Interestingly, these five participants were the only ones unable to partake in voluntary or paid work due to underlying medical conditions. The hobby groups provided the individuals with a sense of purpose and a routine, which contributed greatly to their overall wellbeing. Tina attended a hobby group which she states as the main reason for attending the organisation at one point. She also highlights that it provided her with a distraction from her daily routine and worries.

I came here once a week. [...] It was mainly just for [a hobby group]. [...] And knowing that you don't have to worry about anything in the house, or having to do XYZ, all you have to do it get it in between the lines and you're fine. I have recently started doing [the hobby] again when I'm by myself. It's nice as it gives me something to focus on.

Quinn likewise spoke with great passion about the activity he participated in at the organisation he attended. In his second interview, he reported having been offered an important role in the group, which greatly boosted his confidence and gave him a sense of purpose. Frank reported the therapeutic elements of the hobby he participated in

with his peers. He stated that he met with his friends from the group in their free time to enjoy their hobby together. These cases underline the significance of social contact and a sense of purpose for those at the extreme end of social exclusion. The individuals were not likely ever to be involved in employment due to the severity of their conditions. Therefore, it is a noteworthy finding that those who will not have access to the social networks provided by workplaces, which Woolcock and Narayan (2000) emphasise as hotspots for social capital, capitalised on the different areas of service provision the most.

Many service users in Dundee are suffering or recovering from drug or alcohol addiction (Dundee Fairness Commission, 2017). This was also recognised by some of the participants, who referred to the attendance of the individuals at the community groups. Of those participants classified as being part of the hidden communities, Charles, James and Diana had reported recovering from their addiction. James directly attributed overcoming his drug addiction to the support of his friends from community food banks and soup kitchens.

I dinnae ken where I'd be if I didnae have the lads. See last time I spoke to you, I was away wi' it with those fake valies and that spice stuff, that was still legal see. [...] But they helped me clean up my act, just get my shit together really. Now I'm working with [local advocacy work] and I wouldn't have been able to do it without them.

Charles and Diana did not directly attribute their recovery to attending the groups, but both attributed maintaining their sobriety through the sense of purpose provided to them by the organisations and their duties as a paid worker and volunteer, respectively. Diana discusses how a significant life event would have previously resulted in her relapsing but having her volunteering opportunity provides her with the sense of purpose to keep her sober.

I've kinda turned my life aroond and I'm doing a lot better, but I'm still on my antidepressants. [A close family member] just died there. I know I've kinda – I'm no on the drink. I wouldnae have come back on the methadone. Just substitute it for something else. That woulda just been stupid. I would've just stayed on it. It's no good no ha'in nothing to dae (nothing to do). It's no good for the heed. My head is affy quick. So, I need something to dae. That's why I started [here].

These stories demonstrate that the individuals have reclaimed the agency over their lives, by attributing their wellbeing to their own actions, even if it was supported through the emotional support of their friends. This process is actively re-establishing the powerlessness as identified in Chapter 5 (Narayan, 2000). Bryant's (2018) study on individuals accessing services for substance use issues found that the networks individuals built provided support, but also enabled individuals to regain access to drugs. This study found that the benefits of the communities far outweighed the disadvantages. Whilst Bryant's study solely focuses on young adults recovering from addiction, this study found that having a network of individuals who have shared experiences is applicable to a wide range of experiences. Rosie tells her story of how going through supported housing and eventually finding acceptance in the organisation she attended allowed her to re-establish connections to family members she had previously lost contact to.

I'm in touch with my family now. I didn't think I was good enough for them for a couple years, so I'm now back in touch with my family, so... yeah... It was the best thing that ever happened because I got put into supported housing, then I got transferred into a council flat. So it was the best thing that ever happened. My mum said it was a scary way to do it, and my dad says it was a very scary way for me to go 'round it, but it worked out for the best. [...] I've got my friends here, I've got a life here, I've got this place. I don't know where I'd be without this place.

Rosie's case was distinct from that of the other participants as she reported having rebuilt connections to her family as a result of accessing support from the organisations. She attributes her increase in wellbeing and confidence and her overall improved mental health, which was stimulated by the organisation she attended, to re-establishing these relationships. None of the other participants reported getting back in contact with people who they were close to prior to accessing services.

For those who struggled with mental illness, the social aspect of coming to a community support group was especially valuable to personal wellbeing. Ugo had become ostracised through years of struggling to cope with mental illness, particularly after he was institutionalised for several years after having committed a crime. He grappled with rebuilding social contact after this experience. However, a local mental health support group provided him with the stimulation to engage in social activities.

To start with it was an amazing opportunity to get out of the house and do something in a safe environment. Then it grew exponentially. Meeting wonderful people. Being around very conscious staff and volunteers. Being able to express myself and sharing time with people who were in similar situations. Emmm. Plus, it gave me a bit more confidence and think that there is more to life than what I thought previously. Put my mind to ease.

The friendships formed with other people result in positive individual, social, and economic outcomes. On an individual level, the people reported higher levels of perceived wellbeing, self-confidence, and outlook on life. Socially, individuals have created supportive networks of individuals who provide a source of moral and emotional support, comfort and acceptance. Whilst this final argument could be categorised as a personal gain, the fact that these connections have led individuals to engage in paid employment, further education or voluntary positions certainly have positive repercussions for society. This is particularly relevant for those who were long-term unemployed prior to their new position. The networks themselves were perhaps not as vital towards engaging in employment as was the moral support provided by the network of people surrounding them. Whilst the networks contributed towards the knowledge of the organisations in which the individuals found paid employment; they were not necessarily responsible for achieving this position. Voluntary positions, on the other hand, were very much attributable to the individuals' prior engagement with the organisations as a service user.

However, whilst most people spoke very highly of these community-like support groups, it is important to note that they should not be the sole solution to the cause. Ugo entails how one of his friends from the support group had recently committed suicide.

It's a shame that people even coming into [this organisation] that things sometimes prove too much for them. Even with all that's gone on before, with interventions it's just too late. Life's taken its toll.

This quote serves as a reminder that whilst these organisations can be lifesaving to many, in some cases external factors such as mental illness or traumatic life events cannot be resolved through even the best service provision. Intervention services in



many fields are still necessary for cases like this. This highlights the importance of understanding life stories or back-stories as a means of identifying likely trigger points for earlier intervention.

These findings offer an alternative interpretation of social capital and poverty. Previous social capital theory is too simplistic and individualistic to elaborate the effects of the relationships built in these networks. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital as a shared sense of belonging to a collective is very much applicable here, but the benefits of the social networks the individuals have established go far beyond the individuals' expectation to reap long-term personal benefits. These findings contrast theories which state that individuals who live in poverty lack wider social networks (Hall, 1999). The individuals of this study created these networks as a direct result of living in poverty, demonstrating that the human need for connection surpasses the isolating effect of shame through stigmatisation (Lister, 2015). The findings also add to our understanding of social exclusion. The definition by Pierson (2002) defines social exclusion as an exclusion of certain population groups from institutions and the wider population. Prior to service access, it could indeed be argued that the individuals were excluded from wider society through stigmatisation (see Sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.3) and from public institutions through multiple disadvantages in the field of employment (see Section 5.3.4), welfare (see Section 5.6) and housing (see Section 5.5.1). This study demonstrates that whilst individuals were indeed initially excluded from the wider society, they created communities in which they were indeed included. Within these communities, they felt accepted without judgement and were not subjected to the shame caused by the stigmatisation of the wider society (Lister, 2015). This could drive future developments on social policy, as the benefits of these types of environments are currently not recognised within key policy documents (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Dundee Partnership, 2016; Dundee Partnership, 2019). The difficulties of these organisations to secure funding (see Section 6.3.2) further demonstrates that the benefits of these environments are not publicly recognised. The following section will discuss the engagement of service users in voluntary action.

## 7.6 Blurring the boundaries between service users and volunteers

One theme which emerged strongly from the interviews with service users and support workers was how community organisations had the potential to engage service users in volunteering efforts. This is a highly valuable finding demonstrating the ability of services to reintegrate “isolated” individuals into the community. Bryant (2018) found that whilst organisations may provide bases for creating social networks, the support provided by the organisations themselves can provide support in creating economic capital. The findings of this study support this, as many of the participants found employment or voluntary positions within the organisations they attended or were led to external opportunities. As ex-service users, the individuals will be able to demonstrate high levels of knowledge and validation towards future service users by sharing relatable experiences (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018). Whilst the term “co-production” was not integral to the discourse used by the participants, values which reflect the essence of the term were demonstrated as being highly integral in practice. For some individuals, the change from being a service user to a volunteer marks a significant milestone in the way they perceive themselves as a part of society. The following quote from Ugo encapsulates the psychological process behind his transition from service user to a volunteer.

Well another thing that [this support group] have taught me, even more so when I was intent on educating the world. I never really got much satisfaction, although I achieved so much along the way. But I get satisfaction now in doing the small things, helping the community. It makes a big difference to see the impact that it's had in the community. It's nice to be doing something and giving something back when I've been taking for so long.

He also recalls that whilst the change occurred, it was not an easy step to take.

The changeover was quite difficult for a long time. To go from being a client, which I was for many years, to having some sense of a responsible role, although being supported, having a level of self-expectation at least.

Ugo's reflection on the transition from being a service user to a support worker demonstrates the internal conflict that may accompany the role.

Prior to her engagement as a volunteer, Diana reported working as a peer mentor in a substance use organisation she had attended as a service user, but she reported being

made redundant as the funding was cut. Beatrice was supported into a college degree through the recommendation of her support worker. A worker stated that they started volunteering in a community food bank after having been a service user there themselves.

I work there anytime I want mate. It's basically helping with the foodbank, 'cause people is hungry and they've got nae money, nae food, nae nothing. Ken what that's like myself, so thought why not.

This mindset of volunteering as a result of having experienced the effects of poverty himself was a common reason for volunteering. As mentioned in Section 7.5, the roles also provided the individuals with a sense of purpose and a routine, which was vital to their wellbeing.

Building relationships between the individuals was a prerequisite to engaging with the wider aspects of the organisations. This corresponds with Agger and Jensen's (2015) research, which found that bonding social capital was a prerequisite to building wider social networks, but this was not a prerequisite in all cases within this study. Charles had stronger connections with the workers in his organisation than his peers. However, he stated having an aversion to wanting to have connections to other service users as he had recently recovered from alcoholism and was worried that he might relapse if he were to engage in social activities with them. Charles initially accessed services for support as he was struggling financially and needed support to overcome his alcoholism. Through these services, he was referred to a community food bank and soup kitchen. He initially attended the events as a service user, requiring food donations. Over time, he built up a good relationship with the workers and some of the attendees, offering to volunteer his time to the cause. The events at Charles's premises are generally run by volunteers, but the premises themselves, which are part of a religious institution, also employed paid staff to manage the building. Over time, having proven himself to be a trustworthy and hard-working volunteer, he was offered a job at the building. He underlines that whilst on paper he is helping the institution with his time, the position also helps him to have a purpose and stay sober.

It's nice to be nice. It helps keep me oot. Everybody wins. If you're starving, I'm helping you cause you're getting to eat, but at the same point I'm helping myself,

because something constructful [sic] for me to do keeps me sober, so everybody wins. [...] They help me. I'm helping them help me. Once again, everybody wins.

Charles's quote underlines the dialectic process of individuals giving to the community, but also gaining personal benefits. Ugo, Michael and Rosie also spoke of how volunteering helped to overcome the isolation caused by mental illness and poverty as it allowed them to become part of a small community. Diana's story is similar; however, she wishes that there were more opportunities as she struggles to find paid employment as a result of her criminal convictions. These stories clearly highlight the symbolic significance of having a purpose to the lives of the individuals. They contribute to their wellbeing and actively stimulate social inclusion. Diana and Michael had found employment in the months after the initial interviews and the positions were achieved directly through involvement with the organisations. This demonstrates that individuals were able to gain employment in these arenas in which they were accepted, where they otherwise struggled gaining access to employment.

Ugo summarised the importance of having community services to overcome the issues caused by the stigmatisation of living in poverty.

This is a big problem. The stigma of being on sickness benefits or unemployed. That's something else that needs to be addressed. I do believe that people need to be empowered as much as they need to be given their income that they can survive on. The best way to empower people is to have services such as [this support group]. To have services where people can come together and grow in unity.

Ugo's point about growing in unity further supports the argument of this type of collective capital being a network defined by its solidarity with one another. For some individuals it is not necessarily the ability to talk about issues with individuals who understand but being in a place surrounded by people who make you feel at ease. This was the case for Penny, who stated that she did not find "gurning" about her problems helpful, but preferred being in a place of positivity and knowing that individuals have been through similar issues as she was sufficient to her needs. This was also the case for Diana, who stated that she did not feel comfortable disclosing her past to others but knowing that others have been through similar issues made her feel at ease in the premises she attended and volunteered at.

This accords with research that has been conducted in studies on building trust. Confiding in someone who can understand personal struggles through their own experience can lead to a much deeper connection between the individuals. It also facilitates a non-judgemental and comfortable environment, which may be more difficult when service users feel a power imbalance between their workers and themselves (Kirkegaard and Andersen, 2018). This power imbalance could also be attributed to a sort of internalised stigma. The stigma individuals face from wider society, which holds them responsible for their circumstances rather than identifying the role that wider socioeconomic factors play in the creation of inequality, can result in the individuals feeling shame and, consequently, inadequate (Lister, 2015). This could explain why the individuals frequently experienced the hesitance to connect on a meaningful level to their support workers and rather connected with their peers. The fact that the individuals not only felt part of the organisation, but truly provided a vital part towards its functioning allowed a sense of purpose to flourish. This significantly increased the subjective wellbeing of the participants, which ultimately led to positive outcomes not only for the individuals, but for the entire communities. These findings concur with those of Manuel Macías Balda's (2016) study of the homeless in Edinburgh. One of the most powerful statements from his research was that forceful engagement of individuals with services makes individuals who are already socially excluded feel even more marginalised. Thus, the best way to promote social inclusion is to create a society in which the individuals feel included naturally (34). The community groups acted as an inclusive community for the participants of this research and provided the social interaction and support necessary for the individuals to flourish.

## 7.7 Potential barriers to accessing the support from 'hidden communities'

This section will discuss the individuals who had only accessed an emergency financial service and were not integrated in the wider service network and/or categorised as belonging to a hidden community. The participants of this study who were not categorised as accessing support from a community support group are the following:

- Abigail, who was solely seeking support for welfare advice and her children's learning difficulties,
- Gordon, who was seeking support for welfare advice and attending a substance use service,
- Isabell, who was seeking support for welfare advice and had recently lost her husband,
- Karl, who was seeking support for welfare advice as he had recently become unemployed,
- Lewis, who was seeking support for welfare advice and had recently become homeless,
- Nicole, who was seeking support for welfare advice and accessing food banks,
- Olivia, who was seeking support for welfare advice and receiving support from a women's organisation after having experienced an abusive relationship,
- Veronica, who was seeking support for welfare advice and social services as she had not been paid from a previous employer and was dealing with a related legal battle,
- Warren, who was seeking support for welfare advice after having been made redundant and struggling to find new employment.

These individuals were all seeking welfare advice during the times of their interviews, as they were recruited for this research through financial and welfare support agencies. Abigail, Nicole and Warren had been in contact with services for long periods of their lives, as Abigail was unable to work due to being a full-time carer for her two children and Warren had been made redundant on two occasions, stating his age as a barrier to finding new employment. The other five individuals listed had very recently experienced a traumatic life event, such as bereavement, a family breakdown, becoming unemployed or becoming homeless. There are multiple reasons these individuals did not attend community groups. They include the stigma attached to certain types of organisations, mistrust caused by isolation and previous negative experiences, and simply a lack of knowledge of available organisations. It is, of course, also possible that the individuals would not have chosen to attend these types of organisations, but the participants did mention potential barriers to engage with these services from the onset. To ensure the equality of opportunities, it would be vital to

ensure that these barriers are uncovered and addressed. The following sections will elaborate these in more detail.

Beatrice was considered to have built support networks through community groups for the purpose of this research as she attended a community hobby group with other women who had struggled with poverty-related issues. However, she stated that she did not attend the groups some of the other participants attended, such as community-led soup kitchens and food banks, because she had preconceptions about the individuals who attended said groups.

[...] the junkies and that, it's like, okay, it's self-inflicted and that. Before it got self-inflicted, something must've happened in their lives for that to happen, but I think the government should stop giving them all these handouts. They cry and they get.

Stigma attached to locations that are clearly targeted towards individuals living in poverty is a recognised barrier to engaging individuals with certain services (Whittle et al., 2017), therefore it could be suggested providing more neutral spaces which are targeted to general population groups. This could be a solution for those who do not wish to engage with the organisations studied in this project, but the findings of this research clearly support the necessity of locations in which individuals can find the support of peers, as being around individuals with similar backstories significantly enhanced their feeling of acceptance and helped them to overcome their isolation.

Having recently experienced severe traumatic experiences, which lead to isolation, could also be a significant contributor to not accessing support. As discussed in section 7.3, the individuals who were part of the hidden communities experienced severe isolation prior to initial contact. The precise factors which determine how the individuals make the decisions to access the wider service are not definitive from this research. However, insights are provided by stories such as Diana's, who had difficulties trusting organisations after her children were removed from her care. Olivia, who had currently only accessed support from a welfare advice worker and a worker from a women's organisation, had an experience very similar to Diana's. She had recently had children removed from her care and had a history of consuming drugs with her abusive partner. Olivia reported being very isolated during the time of the interview. She was seeking relocation through the women's organisation as she stated she "need[ed] to start fresh and get away from everything".

When I contacted the police about the domestics with the ex they got involved with [the woman's organisation], instead of going to [another women's organisation] cause obviously I didn't want to go into hostels, cause I like having my house. So, they said to me we'll just put you in with [this organisation], that's someone you can go and speak to, someone that doesn't know you. Just a random person basically. But there's only one person that's assigned to us and they're only assigned for six months. [...] I didn't get involved with them straight away. I did have a bit of a barrier up and never contacted anybody, and then eventually I let them in and started speaking. But it did take us a bit of time, but they did say that I'd be on the waiting list and whenever I phoned, if I needed somebody to talk to.... So it's okay that way.

Olivia refers to several barriers in this quote. She states the issue of non-continuous care, which can cause vulnerable individuals to disengage from a service (Ungar et al., 2014). Diana reported having been in a very similar position prior to engaging with the wider service network. She stated that a small, Third Sector substance use organisation she encountered through a rehabilitation clinic gave her the confidence to engage with support workers to overcome her addiction.

[It] was the [charity] that helped me. They believed that I could do it. They helped changed my mindset. I did a lot of psychological work with my social worker fae the [public substance use service]. Done a lot of work: a weekly planner, building up my confidence, ended up going to college and things like that, so... I thought I'd never get off that methadone.

Diana emphasises the importance of empowerment and continuous support to her recovery. During her recovery process, she started engaging with the wider organisations through which she then made contact to the organisations for which she then started volunteering. The difference between Diana's and Olivia's stories are simply that Diana was fortunate enough to receive the appropriate support at the right time. This raises the question of how to ensure that both women would have received equal opportunities to access the necessary support. Tackling this issue would be related to extending outreach and raising public awareness of the options available to them.

Linking to the above point, the final significant barrier to accessing services is a lack of knowledge of suitable organisations or how to seek support, particularly for individuals who have had minimal contact to services in Dundee. The participant with



the least amount of contact to services during the time of the initial interview was Isabell, who had only had an appointment with a financial advice worker for support with welfare and utility costs. Despite this, Isabell was very distressed during the time of the interview, stating her desire to receive support with accessing food and financial resources following the passing of her late husband and not knowing where to access support for this. Karl and Lewis likewise did not know where to access support for food or financial provisions during times of unemployment and homelessness respectively. These stories point to the necessity of establishing more widely accessible methods of outreach.

Whilst it is important for service providers to take these barriers into consideration and attempt to overcome them to the best of their abilities, ultimately, it is important to recognise individual choice in this subject. Whilst being part of a community has many previously proven benefits and has been furthered through this study, individuals should have a choice about how or whether to engage with them. This falls under the bracket of empowering individuals to make their own decisions, which is an essential element of tackling inequality (Krause, 2013). The reason these types of organisations are so special, is that individuals are able to utilise the networks to promote a sense of solidarity with one another. Previously, the service users had often experienced an extreme power imbalance when accessing services, e.g. when Diana or Olivia had their children removed from their care (see Section 5.3.3) or when Sam had faced charges for accumulating savings from years of disability support (see Section 5.6). The agency individuals had established through their connection with others allowed them to regain a sense of being human, countering the long-term effects of experiencing dehumanising stigmatisation through wider society and institutions. This highlights why human connection is a vital factor to overcoming inequality.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown significant insights into the complexities of the social networks created by individuals who are considered to be socially excluded, both by policy and theory. Exclusion from society and the disadvantages faced by the individuals has driven individuals to create a ‘collective capital’. This is defined by an antagonistic stance towards the Government and associated agencies which have contributed to their malaise, as well as a desire to support others in similar

circumstances and fight inequalities. This notion of collective capital has certain parallels to Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital in that the individuals share certain values and outlooks. However, Bourdieu (1986) views cultural capital as a stratified concept, of which higher cultural capital is more valuable (e.g. higher education). The 'collective capital' as identified in this research demonstrates that human relations are much more complex than their benefit to individualistic economic and social outcomes. The connection built between individuals who can sympathise with each other's needs can rebuild individual wellbeing and allow an individual to re-establish the agency that was taken from them through years of experiencing inequality. It is, of course, important to recognise that individuals created these networks as a reaction to the effects of the inequalities and power disparities they have experienced. Therefore, whilst the benefits of these 'hidden' communities have been proven to be extensive throughout this chapter, their sole existence is poignant, as they highlight the immense exclusion faced by the individuals in wider society. Either way, whether these 'hidden' communities should be promoted by policy as a means of creating support networks for those most severely excluded from the remainder of society, or whether they solely act as a representation of the extremes individuals are driven to in order to survive, the existence of these communities signify momentous failings of the system.

## 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the main findings of this research, to reflect upon the limitations and to consider their importance to future research. First, it will reflect on the research questions as set out in Section 1.5 and briefly give an overview of how this research has answered the questions. This will be followed by a detailed description of the main findings, how they fit into past research on the subject, and how they inform future research. This research demonstrates significant findings, particularly in understanding how individuals affected by poverty build networks of support. In addition, it shows valuable insight into the complexity of national influences and internal power disparities which influence how services are provided and how this subsequently affects those who rely on these services. This chapter will encapsulate the relevance of these findings and how they inform theoretical and policy developments.

### 8.2 Revisiting the research aim

The key aim of this research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how poverty and social exclusion is impacted through the access of social services and wider support networks. This research first approached this through exploring experiences of service users who had experienced the effects of inequality. The inequalities experienced by service users have a significant impact on their lives. In many cases, inequalities were reinforced through national institutions, creating a power disparity between service users and public authorities. This resulted in a restricted engagement of service users with statutory services. However, partnership working opened the gates to a wider range of organisations. The services that had the highest impact on social inequality were community organisations, as they provided supportive environments without judgement and stigmatisation. Whilst the service users still faced financial hardships, they were able to overcome, or at least mitigate, many of the wider effects of poverty, such as isolation, substance use, and mental illness.

This research shows that inequalities are not just experienced by the service users, but are also experienced within the service network, between powerful and less powerful

actors. Those that align most with governmental values, as they are directly funded by public funding and are an integral part of local governments, tend to have more power within the network. These power disparities are carried over to those who access the services, as the services that users gained more support from or were more likely to connect to are those that do not align to government values. These types of services are fundamentally built upon providing alternatives to statutory services (Murray, 2013). The view of the ‘powerful’ authorities as experienced within service networks and by service users are characterised by an unequal distribution of decision-making abilities and resources. This is demonstrated through the Social Network Analysis, in which the statutory services were shown to have the greatest power in multiple categories (see Section 6.4.2.2). It was also further highlighted through the stronger engagement of statutory bodies with local partnerships, which provided them with a stronger voice amongst other organisations, (see Section 6.4.1) and the lack of funding which particularly affected smaller, Third Sector organisations (see Section 6.3.2). These concepts will be discussed throughout the following sections.

### 8.3 Wider implications for theory and policy

#### 8.3.1 Restricted social mobility heightened through intersectional inequality

The first research question focussed on the causes of poverty and the barriers which keep individuals in poverty. Applying a longitudinal qualitative approach helped to identify the dynamic nature of poverty, demonstrating how poverty is not a permanent, rigid state. As discussed in Section 5.3, the individuals shared little in common other than that they originally came from low-income families and neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation. The circumstances that led individuals into poverty, whilst varying in specificities, demonstrates the structural nature of poverty and the structural barriers which keep individuals in poverty. Despite individuals taking steps to ensure financial stability, such as higher education or a long-standing career, the individuals struggled to recover from these events without the provision of wider financial safety nets. Even in cases where individuals had attempted to accumulate assets, the individuals faced structural disadvantages that kept them in poverty. These include a lack of sustainable support for immediate crises (e.g. bereavement, family breakdowns, domestic violence; see Section 5.3.3), access to stable employment (see

Section 5.3.4), and a lack of provision of adequate levels of welfare (see Section 5.6). The lack of social mobility was heightened through experiences of intersectional inequalities, such as inequalities faced by the individuals on the basis of having disabilities, mental illness, and more. Incentivised asset-based welfare could potentially be a method to tackle these issues. Previous research has discussed that a type of government incentive for asset-based welfare, alongside a regulated standard income could be highly beneficial to reducing the financial impact of a traumatic life event (Sherraden, 1991; Searle and Köppe, 2014). However, this research demonstrates that it is problematic to hold the individuals responsible for their own savings, because firstly, the individuals may not have enough additional income to spare, and secondly, even large amounts of money would not be sufficient to match a working income for individuals who are long-term unemployed.

One of the greatest barriers keeping individuals in poverty is the fact that poverty is a symptom of wider inequalities that the individuals face. In this research, having few financial resources was the main barrier to resolving issues which were more pertinent to the individuals' wellbeing, such as dealing with bereavement, mental illness, or addiction. This is not to underplay the importance of financial resources, but to demonstrate that the individuals were dealing with underlying, non-financial issues which were the root cause of their poverty. The negative experiences were compounded through the disadvantages individuals faced in wider society, such as institutional stigmatisation. Stigmatisation has previously been found to be linked to feelings of shame and internalised stigma (Lister, 2015), which were replicated in this study. The participants of this research greatly benefitted from an environment in which they were surrounded by peers (which will be surmised in the following section, Section 8.3.2), and were most likely to engage with services when provided with an environment of acceptance and non-stigmatisation. Another approach that could assist these individuals is to offer more readily available support to assist with the repercussions of traumatic life events. This could include priority access to immediate support services that provide counselling and advice for these pertinent issues. However, as became clear from this research, individuals who are in distress and mistrust services are unlikely to reach out to services themselves, even if they have direct access to them. The effectiveness of a 'priority access' scheme would be highly

dependent on the willingness of individuals to access the services. This could be grounds for a further research project.

The second main issue keeping individuals in poverty was a lack of suitable employment for those seeking jobs. Whilst all individuals, with the exception of Charles, were unemployed during the initial interviews, the participants faced several barriers to employment. This was particularly difficult for older participants such as Harry, who was made redundant not long before his retirement and struggled to find further employment, despite continuous enrolment in training (see Section 5.3.4). Whilst other participants, such as Warren, felt as though they were being discriminated against for not accepting jobs that they were not eligible for (see Section 5.6). This shows that there is a gap in support for individuals seeking employment, with individuals needing more compassionate and personalised support in their job search.

### 8.3.2 Collective capital as solidarity and regaining agency

Research question 2 sought out to identify coping mechanisms as employed by the participants. The phenomenological approach taken in this research allowed the participants to share these experiences and their significance to the researcher. Individuals reported suffering severely from a lack of adequate income. In some cases, they were forced to make difficult decisions, such as the choice between heating their home or buying food (see Section 5.5.2). Having to make this choice demonstrates that individuals who experience poverty still go without the most basic human needs. In many cases, this lack of resources was caused by inadequate provision of welfare (see Section 5.6). Feeling unsupported and stigmatised by the very institutions which were set out to support them in these times of need, the individuals developed an antagonistic stance towards the Government. Whilst the longitudinal element of the research had its weaknesses, as engaging with service users for the follow-up interview was not possible in more than half of the cases, those that participated in the follow-up interviews contributed significant insights into how individuals have established the 'hidden communities' that allowed them to overcome the effects of poverty (Chapter 7).

Individuals most successfully managed the wider effects of poverty through finding solidarity and creating supportive networks of other individuals who had been through similar experiences. These collectives, originating in environments provided mainly

by Third Sector bodies, provided spaces where individuals could escape the stigmatisation which they faced in wider society (Lister, 2015). Escaping stigmatisation is a key factor in the effectiveness of these networks in increasing individual wellbeing, but building trust and finding connection with others was equally as important of an issue. The effects of these attributes were that individuals were enabled to establish a sense of agency, which countered some of the wider effects of poverty. The answer to the first research question demonstrated that poverty is indeed framed through a powerlessness and voicelessness of the individuals as identified by Narayan (2000). The rift between the individuals and institutions was widened through the disparities in power experienced by the participants in the interactions they had with authorities. Becoming part of a collective in environments that are oppositionist by nature (Murray, 2013) and the absence of shame and judgement allowed the individuals to develop a sense of agency, a sense of belonging, and ensure higher levels of wellbeing.

The individual coping strategies are where the main insights of this research lie. The key issue correlated with poverty was the emotional trauma it caused, rather than the actual physical effects of poverty. Individuals had experienced a life event which caused them to suffer emotionally. Either the event itself led directly to unemployment, or the emotional turmoil of the event led to unemployment, which resulted in an increase of poverty experienced by the participants. Shame and guilt were felt arising from the reasons for being in poverty, such as a family breakdown leading to a loss of the partner's income, or an addiction which resulted in losing a job. For many, the psychological impacts of these events were severe. The added pressure of losing financial resources had a detrimental impact on the individuals' ability to cope, both mentally and financially. This was particularly pertinent for those who suffered from disabilities or mental illness. Therefore, the best management strategy was to find a supportive network of peers, who could empathise with the experiences of the individuals and provide emotional support.

Whilst the benefit of these networks was established through the experiences shared by the participants, the very reason for their existence is the result of having experienced such detrimental effects of inequality, that these networks were their sole refuge. Even if these networks display nothing else other than how miserably the social security and economic system has failed them, that they have resorted to creating

support networks amongst themselves, they provide an invaluable asset to understanding modern inequality. They are an indicator of the measures individuals are driven to out of desperation. Current policy measures have a strong focus on building community and increasing social capital (Dundee Partnership, 2012; Scottish Government, 2016a). However, the organisations which were shown to have the largest impact on reducing the effects of inequality often struggled to receive funding, only just managing to survive.<sup>49</sup> Funding bodies require organisations to provide novel approaches to service provision, which tends to suffocate effective service provision (Zimmer and Pahl, 2018). This was an element highlighted both by staff and service users of this research (see Section 6.3.2). It is imperative to long-term social inclusion strategies that these organisations in which individuals can build social networks receive more recognition in their ability to allow individuals to reintegrate themselves into society and increase their wellbeing. These aspects have knock-on effects, such as motivating individuals to participate in volunteering activities, gain paid employment within these service organisations, and addressing addiction, as was the case with the participants of this study (see Chapter 7). The following section will discuss the impacts of this lack of funding in more detail.

### 8.3.3 Partnerships have potential, but neoliberal values suffocate effective service provision

Partnership working as a concept was something welcomed both by policymakers, workers and service users. The support workers welcomed that bureaucratic measures, particularly when contacting other organisations, were simplified through a partnership strategy. The service users welcomed gaining knowledge on a wide range of organisations, particularly when this eased the formerly bureaucratic process of contacting other organisations and collaborating with them. However, there were significant issues that arose from the interviews and the Social Network Analysis that need to be addressed. The novel application of a critical systems approach with a mixed methods methodology allowed for a rich understanding of how organisations interact with one another. Whilst the interviews with staff did not explicitly refer to the power relations between organisational types, the differences in funding access and regulations to adhere by between workers from different types of organisations

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<sup>49</sup> Whether a higher income stream would be beneficial for these organisations could be grounds for further research (see Section 8.5.1).



became clearly visible upon analysis. The mixed methods approach allowed these power disparities to become visualised. The Social Network Analysis demonstrated that statutory bodies did indeed have greater power over the other organisations, as demonstrated in Section 6.4.2.2. The key issue that was to be derived from these findings is that the neoliberal nature of the competition for funding hindered the sheer possibility of smaller actors becoming powerful actors within the network.

Partnership working is a term which can take on many different forms in practice. This became particularly evident from the interviews with policymakers. At its core, it refers to a group of organisations that work together towards a mutual goal. Some organisations had a stronger focus on partnership working, usually being much more structured and sharing a higher load of information and resources, whereas other smaller ones may have referred users to one another and have an informal connection but did not collaborate as such with one another. In some cases, this can be a single organisation, but mostly it is a collective of organisations with mutual interests that exchange information to support each other and carry out services more effectively. An increase in knowledge of available services was initially intended to ease the complex process of service users attending many individual services. The previous process resulted in the service users having to elaborate their story and fill out paperwork afresh every time, often leading to a disengagement with services over the emotional trauma this caused. Certain elements of service provision, such as ease of access, an increased knowledge of available services, and a simplified, coordinated referral process were praised by all levels of participants. Support workers and policymakers spoke highly of the effect of partnership working on the effectiveness of service provision. Support workers reported a simplified process of communicating with other organisations, as this was reported to be extremely bureaucratic prior to the partnerships being established. This research shows that whilst some service users reported struggling with lengthy referral processes, this was eased through an increase in partnership working (see Section 6.4.3), demonstrating that higher collaboration could help to overcome this issue.

Austerity measures, particularly the lack of funding, was the largest barrier that faced effective service provision. As funding bodies generally only provide a limited contract for money, services were constantly faced with the struggle of reapplying for further funding, limiting their resources and manpower, and having to adapt services

to fit funders requirements. Funders are often looking for novel approaches (Zimmer and Pahl, 2018; see Sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.6) and failing to recognise that effective service delivery is dependent upon the ability to develop relationships and built trust over time, as demonstrated in Chapter 7. The funding system is heavily flawed and would benefit from reform. The model of interorganisational competition for income suffocates the provision of services which may be beneficial to reducing levels of inequality. The inequalities were heightened by the organisations' level of alignment with certain partnerships or agencies. Those organisations who were either directly part of a public body or who were part of an established partnership faced far fewer financial difficulties than smaller, innovative organisations. This demonstrates that certain power disparities are still existent within the service network. This can, in turn, affect the way in which services are provided. Staff who suffer from higher workloads as a result of a lack of funding can burn out (see Section 6.3.3.3), demonstrating that this does not only affect those who access services, but those who provide them. Consequently, this could result in services that are effective for individuals, such as those in Chapter 7, being reduced or shut down entirely. This highlights the need for a reconsideration of the current funding climate.

#### 8.3.4 Working towards equality

The final objective of this study was to provide evidence-led best practice suggestions to drive future policy on increasing levels of equality. Whilst the causes of poverty were due to unpreventable situations that are common to human life, a great barrier to financial stability was caused by national policies over which neither service users, support workers and even local policymakers had any control. Austerity measures halt the functioning of effective services, and welfare reforms and cuts drive many people further into poverty and put a strain on local advice services. This essentially draws back to the neoliberal theory of a diffusion of governmental responsibility (Foucault, 1978). Most of the problems facing both service users and support services are created by national legislation and policy over which the communities have no control. This means that the community cannot reverse these issues which are thrust upon them, yet they can assemble as a community and support each other to brace against the effects of a neoliberal agenda.

Local government does have some powers which could help to reverse, or at least minimise, the impacts of national reforms. The Dundee Partnership (2019a) is implementing a city-wide national living wage campaign, which is urging businesses to pay the living wage instead of minimum wage. This could help to reduce the reservations participants expressed about accepting employment in a job which would pay them less than they would receive if they were to remain on welfare. It will also help to eliminate in-work poverty and unstable employment, which is a recognised driver of inequality (Bailey, 2016; Carlin, 2019). The responsibility should not solely lie within local governments. Having discussed the issues surrounding neoliberalism throughout this thesis, the main concerns lie within the private sector. As the private sector makes up for one of the largest employers in Dundee (Dundee City Council, 2016), they need to be held accountable when employees are suffering from unfair working conditions – particularly when it is the public sector that must step in and support people who are let down by private business. Whilst this research did not focus on unfair working conditions in great detail, it was clear that this was a contributor to the inequalities faced by the participants of this study (see Section 5.3.4). Therefore, it is vital that stricter working regulations are taken forward. The following section will focus on the limitations of this research.

## 8.4 Limitations

Whilst overall the methodology of this research was successful in delivering the research aim and objectives, there are some limitations to consider. Originally, this research had intended to carry out four phases of longitudinal interviews with service users. Due to initial difficulties of recruiting service users and the increased difficulties of setting up follow-up interviews, this element of the research was not pursued. Despite these difficulties, the longitudinal elements demonstrated significant insights into the dynamics of poverty, which would not have become clear from individual interviews themselves. The story of James, for instance, who was severely psychologically impacted from a family breakdown and recent unemployment, demonstrated significant insights into the benefits of ‘collective capital’ in increasing levels of wellbeing, overcoming isolation, battling addiction and becoming an active member of the community (see Section 5.7 and Chapter 7). His story, amongst others, was a key case study for understanding the dynamics of poverty and, more importantly, the significance of these ‘hidden communities’. This highlights that

whilst there were some limitations in the implementation of longitudinal research with individuals in poverty, the benefits of this type of qualitative approach are not to be ignored.

A further limitation of this study is that none of the participants in this research were from non-white British ethnicities. This means that these findings may not be applicable to individuals who face additional barriers stemming from potential racism in society, cultural integration issues, language barriers and more. It would be valuable to see whether the concept of attending peer support community groups would still be applicable to minority groups and how this would vary between different groups. The question arises of whether the lack of non-white British participants was a reflection of the ethnic constitution of Dundee, or whether individuals from non-white British backgrounds are excluded from the types of services investigated through this research. This raises potential for future research.

The final limitation is that the Social Network Analysis only covered a small percentage of the service network in Dundee, meaning that the exact power relations may not be precisely accurate. However, as the study included 42 organisations of vastly different backgrounds, the organisations such as the Council Advice Services or the Social Work department, who had significantly higher connections to other organisations and were involved with most organisations who were contacted within this study, the findings do indicate that some public organisations have much greater power within the network than other, smaller actors. In order to provide a more accurate representation of this, it could be useful to conduct a larger study. The following section will discuss suggestions for further research.

## 8.5 Suggestions for future research

### 8.5.1 Reconsidering social capital

One of the most valuable findings from this research is the creation of hidden communities within Third Sector organisations, which contributed heavily to individual wellbeing through extending social capital. Individuals who have little to no social capital in the traditional sense have had the opportunity to build close-knitted social networks in community spaces, contributing to long-term positive effects, such as increased levels of wellbeing and security. It has also incentivised individuals to

take part in community work, including all sorts of roles from volunteering to being involved in community activism. It would be of great interest to continue this element of the research, particularly as it stands in opposition to much of the previous research on the topic.

Establishing government funding for networks which have arisen as a countermovement to the government seems counterintuitive, as this is the precise institution through which they feel most stigmatised (see Section 5.4.3.3). This raises the question of how this could be framed in policy for future development. The findings on the hidden communities (see Chapter 7 and Section 8.3.2) pose questions for our theoretical understanding of social capital and social exclusion, as well as raise questions for the implementation of novel social policy. There is also great potential for reinvestigating the concept of social capital and what it means for individuals who experience poverty. Previous concepts of social capital describe social capital as a resource available mainly to individuals of a higher social standing (Bourdieu, 1986) and is necessary for a thriving economy (Putnam, 1995). The findings of this research have identified a new type of ‘collective capital’, which has arisen out of severe inequality and is characterised by solidarity and mutual support, demonstrating that human connection is far more complex than previously theorised. Whilst ‘collective capital’ shares certain elements of Bourdieu’s (1986) theory on cultural capital, such as shared outlooks and experiences, it contrasts the individualistic thinking of previous theories on social capital. Even exchanges of reciprocity as marked by their long-term benefit to either the individual or the economy (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 1995). These findings showed that these exchanges were not driven by an individualistic expectation towards a future gain, but by an act of compassion and solidarity, which is the result of the individuals having experienced extreme isolation and poverty beforehand.

These findings certainly raise potential for further exploration. What are the long-term effects of being involved in these ‘hidden communities’ (meaning longer term than was possible to research in this study)? Is it better to promote ‘hidden communities’ through the implementation of more funding for these types of environments, or will the increase in funding stifle the very oppositionist philosophy on which the organisations as identified in Section 7.2 operate? Whilst only a minor point in this research, previous research has found that creating a “sponsor-client” relationship

between innovative organisations can stifle true innovation (Sinclair et al., 2018), which raises the question of whether giving the organisations in which these ‘hidden communities’ thrive more funding would truly be an effective solution, at least in the current funding climate. Further researching these questions could lead to an improved theoretical understanding of social capital, whilst potentially providing useful policy guidelines for combatting the isolation experienced by individuals in poverty.

#### 8.5.2 The effects of intersectional inequalities

The prevalence of intersectional inequalities is highly documented. Stigmatisation and exclusion from accessing support from social institutions has been documented for individuals who experience poverty in combination with further issues, such as substance use issues and mental health issues (Perese, 2007; Whittle et al., 2017; Room, 2005). It can also be intensified through belonging to a marginalised group (Atrey, 2018). This research demonstrated the prevalence of inequalities still faced by British citizens, which is caused by structural flaws that fail those who most rely on the support of wider structural networks. Whilst all participants faced inequalities as a result of their experiences in poverty, certain demographic attributes further increased the inequalities that the individuals faced. Intersectional inequalities affect women, members of the LGBTQ+ community (see Section 5.3.3), individuals with illnesses and disabilities (see Section 5.3.2.2), and those with other experiences which subject them to further discrimination.

There were some individual cases which could benefit from further exploration. For instance, the cases of Diana and Olivia, whose children were removed from their care despite being victims of domestic violence, were supplied with drugs through abusive partners. This highlights significant potential for further exploration on gender considerations and inequality. More generally, a further discussion of how to tackle these inequalities and ensuring that institutions do not subject vulnerable individuals to further discrimination could provide useful political advancement.

#### 8.5.3 Exploring long-term effects of welfare conditionality

This study was carried out during the initial stages of Universal Credit (UC). Karl’s story (see Section 5.6) signalled early difficulties with the implementation of this scheme. Research which has been published following the data collection phase of this study further highlights that Universal Credit has driven individuals into further

poverty, including making families homeless and driving individuals to resort to crime as a means to survival (Beatty et al., 2015). Welfare systems are designed to be a financial support system for individuals who are unable to work or are otherwise unfairly disadvantaged as part of the Marshallian model of citizenship. Marshall (1949) states that it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that all citizens are ensured a standard of life that is acceptable within the norms of the respective society. This notion has been severely neglected during the implementation of the welfare reforms, which has adopted an approach of conditional access to welfare, further driving the discourse of the ‘undeserving poor’ (Wacquant, 2009). Despite the British Government’s statement of the contrary, research on the Welfare Reform Act 2012 has predicted and identified a devastating impact of the reforms on individuals who rightfully access welfare (Beatty et al., 2015; Cross, 2013; Beatty and Fothergill, 2018; Machin, McCormack and Gidlow, 2018). The Government has released claims that Universal Credit has supported individuals into work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2017b); however, previous research, as well as the experiences of the participants of this research (see Section 5.3.4), shows that work is often unstable, low paid, and thus, unsustainable, so this change is not necessarily a positive one. This research concurs with findings of previous research which have highlighted the many issues surrounding UC (Beatty et al., 2015; Beatty and Fothergill, 2018; Machin, McCormack and Gidlow, 2018). Karl’s story of having to wait weeks without any income, forcing him to live at his partner’s house and driving him into debt, is indicative of these issues. Whilst most of the participants of this research were solely expecting the transition, the effects of the full impact of Universal Credit would have to be further explored. It would be vital to understand the long-term impacts of Universal Credit to understand the impact it has had on long-term inequality.

Many of the participants of this research had experienced the transfer from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which affected individuals with disabilities and mental illness. As outlined in Section 5.6.4, this had devastating impacts on those who went through the assessment process. Individuals developed suicidal thoughts and experienced relapses in mental illnesses as a result of the stresses of the process. Even the individuals’ support workers were aware that the assessments were not carried out under fair conditions, as they advised their clients not to shower for several days and wear dirty clothes as a means to gaining points on

the assessment scale. This, and previous, evidence is conclusive that these reforms have failed. Individuals considered to be the most vulnerable in our society have been driven to the brink of suicide, stigmatising those with mental illness, learning difficulties, hidden disabilities, and even those with visible disabilities but are not considered ‘disabled enough’ for support (Cross, 2013). The rift between institutions and individuals living in poverty is only further widened through the creation of strict conditionality which treats welfare recipients as undeserving, dehumanising them in the process (Wacquant, 2009). This would have to be further explored, as the initial stages of the assessment for and implementation of PIP left individuals in an incredibly vulnerable state. It would be of vital importance to policy to explore how this has affected recipients on a long-term basis.

There is also great scope to examine the role of the private sector in increasing the inequalities faced by individuals forced into unstable, low-paid employment through UC. Several cases within this research demonstrated that employers had unfairly treated their employees, whether that was through not paying wages or suddenly cutting hours (see Section 5.3.4). This raises the question of whether these unfair working conditions have improved for individuals following the implementation of UC. Does the private sector take responsibility for the wellbeing of their staff? What guidelines are being adhered to ensure the fair treatment of employees? Understanding how and whether the private sector drives or can hinder inequality could provide a useful basis for developing strategies to target in-work poverty.

#### 8.5.4 Systems approaches to understanding wider inequalities

Much of the previous research on inequalities focuses on understanding or attempting to tackle individual elements of inequality (see Chapter 3). By applying a novel methodological approach to understanding local inequality, this research was able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the wide range of dynamic processes that shape inequality on a micro- and macro-sociological basis. The social network analysis of this research was an innovative element of the project and highlighted power disparities within the network. A larger study could perhaps include a more in-depth evaluation of other measures of partnership working, such as knowledge exchange, resource flow and more in the survey. With more time, the research could branch out to reach more organisations. This research chose to focus on elements of



knowledge exchange and resource flow, but only regarding the referral process. This approach could also be applied to further investigating those institutions which are characterised by their higher power, such as those affiliated with the Government (as outlined in Section 5.4.3.3). This could assist in understanding how these power disparities are recreated by members of the organisations themselves. Understanding these processes could offer key tools to understanding how power is replicated throughout society<sup>50</sup> and how this affects inequality.

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the significant contributions made by this research to understanding how individuals considered to be in poverty experience inequalities and the steps they take to mediate them. The key aim of this research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how inequality is impacted through the access of social services and wider support networks. The novel application of a critical systems approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how power relations are experienced within networks, how services are affected by wider national influences, and most importantly, how this affects the inequality as experienced by service users.

The most significant finding from this project is the identification of a novel type of social capital, which has been named ‘collective capital’ within this thesis. Its core arguments are that a lack of economic capital is not intrinsically linked to a lack of social capital and that social networks should be recognised as having more value than contributing to economic advancement. The establishment of solidarity can lead to a wide range of positive effects which counter inequality, such as the creation of a common agenda, reclaiming agency and power, and increasing levels of wellbeing.

To conclude, this thesis has demonstrated significant insights into the understanding of inequality, social capital, and partnership working, which all provide useful bases for future research. Whilst this research advocates the implementation of more innovative service provision to combat inequality in the short-term, such as those

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<sup>50</sup> Whilst discourses of power were only a minor element of this project, this could link into wider theory of power, such as Foucault’s theory of power in discourse (1977) or Steven Lukes’s concept of power in *Power: a radical view* (2005). Both theories offer insights on how power is replicated through social structures and language (discourse), which could make for interesting research on how this affects inequality within the service network.

outlined in Chapter 7, it is vital that the structural inequalities outlined in Chapter 5 are targeted to combat the reduction of inequality on a permanent basis.

## 9 References

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Research information sheet (service users)

#### **Research information sheet**

I am a PhD student at the University of Dundee. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

This questionnaire is a precursor to a longer study. I am looking to gather experiences of Dundonians who are currently seeking help from services to support them with financial issues, the welfare reforms, or other similar issues. I hope to find information which can help making services more effective in supporting people. This will hopefully help tackle poverty in Dundee.

Through this questionnaire, I am hoping to know a little more about you and your current situation. After the questionnaire, I will contact you about interviews, should you choose to take part. The interviews will be held once every 6 months over a 2 year period (4 interviews in total). I will compensate you for your time through vouchers for a supermarket. The interviews will focus on your background and your experiences in Dundee, particularly in regards to services. They will also focus on how your circumstances (e.g. employment, housing and living arrangements, finances) have changed between interviews.

You can stop participating at any time. If there is any question you do not wish to answer, just let me know and we will continue with another question. Please understand that your **participation is entirely voluntary**. If you wish to stop participation, you may do so without having to provide an explanation. All information collected will be read only by me. The data will be secured so that only I have access to it. It will then be **anonymised** in a way that no one could identify you from reading my research once it is finished. If you have understood this and would be interested in taking part, please contact Marisol via telephone on 07871983552 or via e-mail at [m.j.lopez@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.lopez@dundee.ac.uk).

The University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Dundee has reviewed and approved this research study.

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire for service users

**Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

**Marital Status:** ☐ Single ☐ Cohabiting  
☐ Married ☐ Widowed  
☐ Divorced ☐ Prefer not to say

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Prefer not to say

1. What is your current employment status?
 

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed     | <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary work    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to work | <input type="checkbox"/> Student           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retired            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other          | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
  
2. How long has this been your employment status?
 

|                                     |                                      |  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 6-12 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 years  | <input type="checkbox"/> 3+ years    | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
  
3. What is your current housing tenure?
 

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Own outright      | <input type="checkbox"/> Own, paying mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> Privately rented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social housing    | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |   |   |
  
4. Are you currently receiving welfare?
 

|                              |                             |  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
  
5. Have you been subjected to any of the following changes in welfare (even if you have stopped receiving welfare)?
 

|   |   |                                    |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change from DLA to PIP | <input type="checkbox"/> Universal Credit | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanctions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____     | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A       |

How has this affected you?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Which services are you currently accessing?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. (*optional*) Is there any issue in particular for which you have been seeking support? If so, please elaborate:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Preferred Method of Contact

☐ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Post: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Research information sheet (support workers)

### Research information sheet

I am a PhD student at the University of Dundee. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

I am looking to gather experiences of support workers who are currently working with services engaging with financial issues, the welfare reforms, or other similar issues. I hope to find information which can help making services more effective in supporting people. This will hopefully help tackling poverty in Dundee.

The questions will focus on your general experiences of working in the field of social support, how policy measures influence service provision, and other related matters. I will not ask any questions which could compromise confidentiality of your service users. This is not the intention of the interviews.

You can stop participating at any time. If there is any question you do not wish to answer, just let me know and we will continue with another question. Please understand that your **participation is entirely voluntary**. If you wish to stop participation, you may do so without having to provide an explanation. All information collected will be read only by me. The data will be secured so that only I have access to it. It will then be **anonymised** in a way that no one could identify you from reading my research once it is finished. If you have understood this and would be interested in taking part, please leave your contact details below.

**By signing below you are indicating that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and that you agree to take part in this research study.**

**Print name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Preferred Method of Contact

☐ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Consent form (service users)

### Participant consent form

I am a PhD student at the University of Dundee. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

This questionnaire is a precursor to a longer study. I am looking to gather experiences of Dundonians who are currently seeking help from services to support them with financial issues, the welfare reforms, or other similar issues. I hope to find information which can help making services more effective in supporting people. This will hopefully help tackle poverty in Dundee.

- I have read the information sheet about this study
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study
- I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions
- I have received enough information about this study
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study:
  - At any time (until such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told)
  - Without giving a reason for withdrawing
- I agree to the audio recording of the interview, which will only be heard by the researcher during transcribing
- I agree to take part in this study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person obtaining consent

The University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Dundee has reviewed and approved this research study.

## Appendix 5: Consent form (support workers)

### Participant consent form

I am a PhD student at the University of Dundee. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

I am looking to gather experiences of support workers who are currently working with services engaging with financial issues, the welfare reforms, or other similar issues. I hope to find information which can help making services more effective in supporting people. This will hopefully help tackling poverty in Dundee. The questions will focus on your general experiences of working in the field of social support, how policy measures influence service provision, and other related matters. I will not ask any questions which could compromise confidentiality of your service users. This is not the intention of the interviews.

- I have read the information sheet about this study
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study
- I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions
- I have received enough information about this study
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study:
  - At any time (until such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told)
  - Without giving a reason for withdrawing
- I agree to the audio recording of the interview, which will only be heard by the researcher during transcribing
- I agree to take part in this study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person obtaining consent

The University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Dundee has reviewed and approved this research study.



## Appendix 6: Helplines for service users

### **FREE HOTLINES**

#### **Shelter**

Through this helpline, all kinds of housing related problems, from finding a place to sleep to suggesting how to handle mortgage arrears can be solved. Advisers can give immediate assistance, tell you your rights, link you with specialist local services for the longer term.

Helpline **08088004444**

#### **One parent families Scotland – Lone parent helpline**

Free, confidential information on benefit/tax credit entitlement, child maintenance, contact problems, Legal issues, housing options, employment, education, childcare. The helpline is available to any lone parent or organisation that works with lone parents in Scotland. Local projects in Dundee, Fife and Angus.

Helpline **08088010323**

#### **CALM**

Offer confidential, anonymous and free support, information and signposting to men through the helpline. Callers can talk through a wide variety of issues including abuse, addictions, anger, depression, sexuality, work issues, divorce, racism, bereavement, suicide, divorce and more. Phone calls will not show up on phone bill.

Helpline **0800585858**

#### **Includem**

Free 24 hour helpline providing support for troubled and vulnerable young people, their family and carers. Helpline can respond by providing face to face support to young people where necessary, typically in the family home.

Helpline **08088000408**

### **CHARGED HOTLINES**

#### **Samaritans**

A famous charity that is available 24 hours a day, providing confidential support for people in emotional distress. Their service is unbiased and non-judgemental. There's also a face-to-face service, available at local branches.

Helpline **08457 90 90 90** (Cost: 3p-18p per minute from landline, 6p-51p per minute from mobile)

#### **Support Line**

Member of the Telephone Help-lines association, Support Line offers help to individuals on any issue, providing non-judgemental, confidential support and advice to enable the caller to find ways of coping with a particular problem.

Helpline **01708 765200** (Cost: up to 12p per minute from landline, 3p-45p per minute from mobile)

## **DUNDEE-BASED SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS**

### **Welfare Rights Dundee (Fintry)**

The Welfare Rights Team can help Dundee residents sort out a wide range of benefit and tax credit problems. We can identify what benefits you may be entitled to, assess the merits of your case if you want to challenge a decision, and represent you at tribunal if you have a case.

|              |                                  |   |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Phone:       | E-mail:                          | Address:  |
| 01382 431167 | welfare.rights@dundeecity.gov.uk | Social Work Department<br><br>Jack Martin Way<br>Claverhouse East<br><br>Dundee DD4 9FF |

### **Dundee Healthy Living Initiative (various in Dundee)**

We aim to promote health in its broadest sense, reduce health inequalities and improve the health of those experiencing poverty. We offer a range of healthy activities such as: health information Points, health checks, quit smoking classes, cooking skills courses, weight reduction classes, exercise classes, training in health topics, health issues in the community course, and healthy lifestyle courses.

|              |         |  |
|--------------|---------|--|
| Phone:       | E-mail: | Address (main office):   |
| 01382 435824 | (none)  | Room 21<br>Mitchell Street Centre<br>Mitchell Street<br>Dundee DD2 2LJ |

### **Dundee Community Family Support Project (St Mary's)**

We deliver support and services to families who currently have fragmented services or none at all. We deliver innovative and preventative support to parents and children living in Fintry, Mill o' Mains, Charleston, St Mary's and Lochee.

The project focuses on mental well-being, anti-poverty and employability work alongside family support. We bring city wide services such as legal, welfare rights, counselling, job seeking and adult learning advice to the target areas.

We also co-ordinate services such as leisure, and culture activities in school holidays.

|              |                  |  |
|--------------|------------------|--|
| Phone:       | E-mail:          | Address:                                       |
| 01382 819121 | cfsp@opfs.org.uk | 14 St. Boswell's Terrace<br><br>Dundee DD3 9PT |

## Appendix 7: Coding frameworks

**Coding frameworks****Service users**

| <b>Codes</b>                                | <b>Subcodes</b>               | <b>Explanation</b>   | <b>Example</b>   |
|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Descriptive codes</b>                    |                               |  |  |
| <b>Background and current circumstances</b> |                               |  |  |
| Hometown                                    | Dundee                        | Participants are locals.   | “Eh, I’m from Dundee. I grew up in Fintry. I stay in Stobswell.”                                     |
|   | Another Scottish town or city | Participants have moved to Dundee from another city.   | “I grew up in St Andrews. It's nice for families, but I moved here for a job.”                       |
| Education                                   | College/University            | Participants had attended university or college.   | “I was going to college at Gardyne.”   |
|   | Job-related courses           | Participants had completed courses as part of their employment, such as further training or qualification. | “Certain certificates I got when I was in Aberdeen. Came back and it was a course provided by BIIAB, |

|                           |   |  |  |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
|                           |   |  | British Institute of Innkeepers and Brewers.”  |
| Employment history        | “Few jobs here and there”                                     | Participants spoke of having worked in multiple jobs in different sectors throughout their lives. This is an in-vivo code <sup>51</sup> .                              | “Mainly, it was catering, mainly. But then there was bar jobs, there was convenience stores, there was everything else.”   |
|                           | Never worked or long-term unemployed due to inability to work | Participants had been unable to work for a significant amount of time or have never worked due to an underlying issue that prevented them from partaking in employment | “The last job I had in 2010 I had because the credit crunch.”  |
| Current employment status | Unemployed  | Participants were unemployed, either searching for work or solely partaking in voluntary work.   | “Got made redundant [many years] ago and have struggled to find something since.”  |
|                           | Unable to work  | Participants were unable to work for health reasons or circumstantial reasons.   | “I’ve no been able to work since I got ill.”   |
|                           | Employed  | Participants were in paid employment.  | “I’m the [...] manager up there now, because I’m the only one that’s got the experience and the qualifications, the valid certificate. That’s why I got that job.” |

<sup>51</sup> In-vivo codes use a quote from the transcripts as their code descriptor.

|                           |   |  |  |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| Reasons for unemployment  | Redundancy                              | Participants had been made redundant from a job they were working in.                                  | “I was working in [a support centre] for a wee while, as a peer mentor, but I got paid off.”   |
|                           | Being a carer or full-time parent       | Participants were caring for a family member.  | “I was working beforehand at the supermarket but I stopped when we had the bairns, ken. Been takin care of em ever since.”                       |
|                           | Physical disability                     | Participants had a physical disability which stopped them from partaking in work.                      | “I was diagnosed with autonomic neuropathy. Since then I have been unable to work.”  |
|                           | Mental illness or learning difficulties | Participants had a mental illness or learning difficulty which prevented them from being able to work. | “I lost my job and was put on an early retirement for health reasons.”   |
| Current housing situation | Homeless, in temporary accommodation    | Individuals did not have a home and were staying in hostels or other temporary arrangements.           | “I was originally referred here by the housing officers at the Lily Walker Centre up the road. They said I’d be best coming here for a bit.”     |
|                           | Public or social letting                | Individuals were renting a house from the City council or social housing associations.                 | “It was the best thing that ever happened because I got put into supported housing, then I got transferred into a council flat that I’m in now.” |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  | Own house (mortgage)                        | Individuals owned their home but are still paying mortgage.  | “I don't know what I'm gonna do about my mortgage.”  |
| <b>Analytical codes</b>  |   |  |  |
| <b>Personal reflection</b> – this section includes codes that were not easily categorised, but have analytical value in that they demonstrate the outlook of the individuals |   |  |  |
| Reflection on job search   | Feeling like no jobs available              | Individuals were actively engaged in seeking for employment but felt that there was little availability.   | “I'm looking for work but there's no work out there. I'm kinda lost.”  |
|  | Barrier between unemployment and employment | Individuals felt that they were better off financially being unemployed than being in low-paid employment. | “It's just getting harder and harder. If there is some jobs out there, some of them are only 20-25 hours. That's nae use. Even [my job centre advisor] said that to me. That's no use, you need 30 hours plus. That'd be about £300 a month. Take my paid all expenses, electric, food and a that, there'd be nothing left.” |

|   |                                 |   |  |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--|
|   | Desperation to get back to work | Participants expressed their desire to take part in employment again.                       | “I’m just gonna crack on. Find somewhere to work I hope. I just need a job Marisol. I’m getting fed up of sitting about doing nothing. I really am. I need to work. Need to get back somehow.” |
| Personal issues or traumatic life events that were a pertinent barrier to wellbeing | Abuse                           | Individuals had suffered abuse at the hands of a family member or other trusted individual. | “They’re helping us because I have mental health and I’ve had abusive partners in the past.”   |
|   | Alcoholism                      | Individuals reported an addiction to alcohol.   | “Housing, jobs, alcohol problems, everything like that. I’ve always admitted it was a big problem, but was never prepared to do anything about it.”  |
|   | Bereavement                     | Individuals reported a bereavement which had a significant impact on their wellbeing        | “Normally I had my husband here on wintertime. He was on DLA ‘cause he had COPD and emphysema. [...] He took a stroke to the back of his head. He was only 46 and he passed away in March.”    |
|   | Drug addiction                  | Individuals reported an addiction to drugs  | “Well when I was 16, I ended up smoking heroin, got hooked on that, fell pregnant.”  |

|                                       |   |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--|
|                                       | Family breakdown                                  | Individuals reported either a divorce, losing custody of their children or other similar family breakdowns                           | “We split up the end of last year and I became homeless.”  |
|                                       | Institutionalisation                              | Participants referred to experiences in jail or in a psychiatric institute which affected their ability to reintegrate.              | “Ended in the psychiatric ward in hospital, on and off for a long time and that took me to where I am now.”                                      |
|                                       | Mental illness                                    | Individuals reported suffering from mental illness which prevented them from partaking in everyday life                              | “During that time period my depression and anxiety kicked in as well, being ill, being isolated.”  |
|                                       | Physical illness/disability                       | Individuals had a physical disability or illness which prevented them from partaking in everyday life                                | “I was diagnosed with autonomic neuropathy.”   |
| Reasons for participating in research | Wanting to spread awareness and help others       | Individuals partook in the research as they were keen to give back and hoped that the research outcomes would support others in need | “Thanks very much for this. I hope your outcome helps because I'm willing to help with anything so just get in touch if you need any help.”      |
|                                       | Wanting to make a statement about an organisation | Individuals were so passionate about an organisation that they wanted to express this in the interviews.                             | “That's why I wanted to help ya, cause I worry that [this community organisation] is going to get shut down. I do. I worry about that sometime.” |



|                            |                              |   |  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
|                            | Anger at circumstances       | Individuals were angry at the societal circumstances that had led them to be in the situation they are in and wanted to make a statement. | “Everyone that's been supposed to help me has fucked me over. This is why I'm agreeing to help you as much as you're needing because I've had enough.” |
| <b>Financial situation</b> |                              |   |  |
| Financial struggles        | Debt                         | Rent arrears, taking out loans, and other types of debt   | “I'm still in debt with my rent. Having to pay that back £20 a week from my personal allowance.”   |
|                            | Struggles with utility bills | Either behind in paying bills or paying bills limits the individual's ability to buy other things   | “I was broke again last week, and I had no money because obviously I had pay the bills and now I have no money.”                                       |
|                            | Inability to buy food        | Individuals do not have enough money to buy food  | “Well you've got to make a decision whether to heat or eat. I prefer to be warm and go hungry than the other way around.”                              |
|                            | History of homelessness      | Individuals have been homeless at one point in their lives  | “The way things ended up I ended up in a homeless unit.”   |

| <b>Welfare</b>                   |   |  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Experiences with welfare reforms | Transfer from PIP to DLA                          | Individuals have been transferred to DLA   | "I'm on DLA. I think it's been changed to PIP, but I got that now, I think."  |
|                                  | Sanctions   | Individual had been sanctioned through the new sanction regulations as set by the Welfare Reform Act of 2012                                     | "They argued that I never got a letter. That's how I was sanctioned."   |
|                                  | Transfer to Universal Credit                      | Individual had been claiming benefits that were due to be transferred or in the process of being transferred to Universal Credit.                | "Got rid of that, got signed on to the Universal Credit, and I got told that I had to wait 5 weeks for them to sort it all out."  |
|                                  | Delays in transfer                                | Participants reported delays in being transferred to a new welfare scheme, which usually left them out of pocket until the payment came through. | "I didn't get paid at first. My first payment didn't come through, and then my second payment didn't come through. I went down to the Job Centre to speak to them about it and, that's two days I missed out, and they said that I left a day and thought that was it." |
|                                  | Unawareness or uncertainty about upcoming changes | Participants reported not being aware or not feeling informed about impending changes to their welfare.  | "Do you get income support on DLA? Or is it just ESA and DLA?"  |

|             |   |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|---|
|             |   |   | They keep mixing and changing. I can't keep up with them now.”  |
|             | Universal Credit                                | Individual had started accessing welfare support during the implementation of Universal Credit and had been accessing the benefit from the beginning. | “Got rid of that, got signed on to the Universal Credit, and I got told that I had to wait 5 weeks for them to sort it all out.”  |
| Assessments | Mental distress because of upcoming assessments | The participants reported feeling mentally distressed because of impending assessments, most commonly mentioning anxiety or suicidal thoughts.        | “I keep getting’ the fear I’m gonna fail it, cause I’m off ma methadone. I’m sick fae anxiety and depression, but I’m scared they’re gonna think I’m mentally strong because I’ve got a flat. I’m really worried sick.” |
|             | “Feeling targeted”                              | Participants expressed a mistrust in the system, feeling like they were being made to explain themselves.   | “It just seems that they’re targeting certain people. Making them feel suicidal and kill themselves. I feel like I’m being targeted.”   |
|             | Failing assessment                              | The participants reported failing an assessment for welfare.  | “The first time I got failed. I went back to the job centre and they says just appeal.”   |
|             | Appealing assessment                            | The participants were unsatisfied with the results of a welfare assessment and appealed this.   | “Well like I said I won the appeal. Got my money backdated and a'hin, so that's sorted.”  |

|   |                              |   |  |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| Experiences with Job Centre and DWP     | Feeling stigmatised by staff | Participants reported feeling judged and unfairly treated by staff at the job centre  | “They were insulting. They were calling me stupid because I couldnae fill out the forms, ken.”                                     |
|   | Feeling support by staff     | Participants reported feeling supported by staff at the Job Centre.   | “Get on fine with most of ‘em [in the job centre]. So we should. If you prove you’re looking for work, you dinnae get any bather.” |
| <b>Social capital and relationships</b> |                              |   |  |
| Support from family and friends         | Household tasks              | Participants received support with everyday tasks such as cleaning and shopping when they were struggling to do this alone.   | “She’ll go out and get my benefit, get anyhin I need. Food and leccy and anyhin like that.”  |
|   | “Couchsurfing”               | Friends and family offered the participants a temporary place to stay during bouts of homelessness.   | “I was sleeping on my friends' sofas here there and everywhere.”   |
|   | Financial support            | Participants received financial support from their immediate social circle, either through direct cash loans or grants, or through paying for necessities directly. | “The only help or the only support that I’ve got from the Dundee end was family support toward the transport and the petrol.”      |
|   | Advice and moral support     | Participants received advice on services, financial matters or similar topics to support their  | “I met a friend that was good to me, and he actually brought me up. He actually gave me confidence in my                           |

|                  |                            |   |  |
|------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
|                  |                            | circumstances, or just generally felt they had someone to speak to.                                 | life. He really helped me in some ways.”   |
| Family breakdown | Divorce or breakup         | Participants reported having recently experienced a divorce or relationship breakdown.              | “We split up the end of last year and I became homeless.”  |
|                  | Losing custody of children | Participants reported losing custody of their children through the intervention of social services. | “I got really hammered that my bairns got took. I was neglecting them.”  |
| Stigma           | Illness-related            | Participants reported facing discrimination because of an illness they had.                         | “I go into these places and they says, "oh, you're looking good today. " I wish you'd see the inside of my head. I wish you'd stop saying that. I feel like people don't believe me.”                  |
|                  | Addiction-related          | People felt misunderstood because of their addiction  | “People just keep saying just get aff the drugs. But that’s nae good. You’ve got to go do the underlying work. How you’ve used in the first place, speak through things.”                              |
|                  | Homophobia                 | Individuals felt unfairly treated because of their sexual orientation                               | “There was a lot less safety nets for me as an individual, which cause a whole lot of pressure. I didn't have the same protection as a heterosexual individual. That was hellish. It's like waiting on |

|                                |   |  |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
|                                |   |  | something or somebody else to come knock you down.”  |
|                                | Volunteering  | The participants reported taking part in voluntary work.   | “I’d lost quite a lot of my confidence, but volunteering helped.”  |
| Taking community initiative    | Advocacy work   | The participants reported participating in advocacy work at local events.  | [after talking about attending a political event] “I went through the Fairness Commission. I want to start standing up for people.”  |
|                                | Spreading awareness of the welfare reforms/ supporting others | The participants reported spreading awareness of the welfare reforms through word-of-mouth or online to make others aware of how to access welfare and the options in case they were not satisfied with the outcome. | “I’m actually a member of an [welfare support group on social media]. I’ve been a member for quite a few years, helping people with their problems. This is sanction city. You still see people outside the job centre. Every Friday.” |
|                                | Voluntary work  | Participants reported partaking in voluntary work.   | “I volunteer here, but I don’t tell anyone official that.”   |
| Social and institutional trust | Lack of institutional trust                                   | Participants reported feeling targeted by government or local authorities.   | “That’s where a lot of the money is going. The government at the moment, as far as I’m concerned, they’re picking on vulnerable people to meet the targets at the moment.”   |

|   |                       |   |  |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|
|   | Lack of social trust  | Participants reported not feeling that members of their community are trustworthy or have a lack of a moral compass.                                  | “There’s only so many times they can help, and they’re trying to take the mick of it. And that annoys me. They’re no struggling. Half of them are on that DLA and everything. They’re on more money than eh on. And yet they’re trying to take the mick. It really annoys me, that.” |
|   | Regained social trust | Participants reported rebuilding their trust towards others in their community after being part of a ‘hidden’ community, as identified in this study. | “It’s just changed my life, this. There’s so many good people here willing to help. All the volunteers, [the managers]. It’s made me think better about the world.”  |
| <b>Services</b>                             |                       |   |  |
| Drivers for reaching out to initial service | Advice from a friend  | Participants were advised by a friend to seek support from an agency when they shared what they were going through.                                   | “I was referred to them by one of my friends. He’s gone through this before, a guy from my college course, and he said that I should go to them if I needed any help.”   |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | Desperation                                 | The participants were at a point in their lives where they did not know what else to do.   | “I was couchsurfing and came here because I had nowhere else to go.”  |
|  | Post-institutionalisation                   | The individuals were prescribed support as part of their recovery after having been institutionalised (e.g. psychiatric hospital, prison). | “It’s just basically, I was in jail, and when I was ready to come out, she came out to see us.”   |
|  | Public notice                               | The participants were made aware of a service through public notices, e.g. leaflets through the door, newspaper ads                        | “I got a letter through saying that I could apply for the winter warmer, and I phoned up and queried about it.”   |
|  | Discovering long-term benefits              | The participants discovered long-term benefits to engaging with the services, which  | “Weekly appointments. It was sporadic to start with, then a wee while... I wasn’t engaging, then I started engaging when I thought there was a chance of getting my kids back, and sounds quite... It was the only reason I done it.” |
| Reasons for engaging with services (note this is different from the previous section, as initial access does not equal engagement) | Feeling accepted and/or part of a community | The participants named feeling part of a community as one of the most important parts of accessing services.                               | “Got a lot of time for the lads. If I was really struggling, I know they’d help me. He’s the kinda lad that he wouldn’t see anyone starving. If something would happen, I know  |



|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   |  |  | that I would still have somewhere to go.”   |
|   | Being referred to a more suitable organisation | The participants reported being referred to an organisation which was more suitable to their needs.                                | “I was originally referred here by the housing officers at the [homeless unit] up the road. They said I’d be best coming here for a bit. Came here and been here since.”  |
| Positive attributes of support services | Continuity of care                             | Participants highlighted the importance of continuity of care, e.g. meeting with the same worker during appointments.              | “With my carer you got a rota sent every week telling you who you were gonna get. You knew exactly what time they were gonna come and who it is.”   |
|   | Friendly/empathetic staff                      | Participants reported the friendly attitudes and empathetic treatment by staff as being a valuable attribute of service provision. | “[My advisor] couldn’t get any better. Classy and easy going. He helped us with the electric and the food vouchers as well.”  |
|   | Social network                                 | Participants felt strongly about the benefits of the social network they established within the organisations they attended.       | “To start with it was an amazing opportunity to get out of the house and do something in a safe environment. Then it grew exponentially. Meeting wonderful people. Being around very conscious staff and volunteers.” |

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   | Honest advice from support workers                                  | Participants reported appreciating honest and straightforward advice from their support workers.                         | “She didn't bullshit me. I don't like bullshitters. I'm dyslexic so I can't read between lines. So I like people to tell it just like it is. She did that.”  |
| Negative attributes of support services | Inter-organisational competition takes precedent over service users | Individuals felt that the services prioritised outcome goals over providing adequate services towards the service users. | “Initially I was working with [an organisation] in Edinburgh then I came to Dundee. And I feel like there's almost a competition. They don't really work with each other. Well, they do, but they don't really like each other. They're in conflict with each other. And at the end of the day, a service user, client, whatever... a human being, you shouldn't be able to sense anything. But unfortunately, I don't think they're at that stage yet.” |
|   | Flawed referral system  | Participants reported disengaging due to an ineffective referral system which left them without appropriate support.     | “And I had some quite bad experiences, especially with the [specialist] organisations, where I was with one organisation, and they referred and referred and referred, didn't seem to work with each other, and it actually made me quite unwell at one point.”  |

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|                               | Inconsistency                      | A lack of continuity was reported as a reason to disengage with services.   | “With Dundee City Council you didn’t know who you were gonna get. [...] I felt quite stressed not knowing who I was gonna get.”  |
|                               | Incompetent or unsympathetic staff | Participants reported disengaging due to feeling that their staff did not take an active interest in their work or did not have sympathy for the service users. | “I don’t think a lot of these service people have good attitude. [...] Or maybe they cannae be bothered.”  |
|                               | Lack of availability               | Participants felt like services or workers were not available frequently enough, or they were not aware of how to get a hold of them.                           | “[My support worker]’s all over the place in Dundee. I canna really find her or get in touch with her.”  |
|                               | Feeling out-of-place               | Participants reported an unwelcoming environment as a reason for disengaging with a service.  | “I tried to literally spend as much time locked in my room as possible because I didn’t want to spend my time with dodgy people, and I know how easy it is to get pulled in amongst that all.” |
| Reasons for requiring service | Financial advice                   | This includes advice on welfare, debt, and utility bills.   | “I knew they were gonna change me to PIP, but I was so worried about the assessment, that [my support worker] told me to contact [the welfare advice agency].”                                 |

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|                     | Requiring emergency funds or food   | This includes support such as crisis loans, food banks and food parcels.  | “They left me with nothing, so I went to the Council to ask for a crisis loan.”   |
|                     | Requiring emotional support   | This encompasses a range of organisations that were accessed for their value to mental health and wellbeing.  | “I came here for a bit of support, because I was at my wit’s end.”  |
|                     | Service prescribed by authorities or health care                          | This includes individuals who were prescribed the service from their CPN, social worker or similar workers were required to access the service as part of their recovery        | “It was my CPN that told me about this place.”  |
| Effects of services | Traumatic life event due to not receiving adequate care                   | Attempted suicide, falling deeper into addiction and death were amongst the things mentioned that participants attributed to not receiving adequate care when it was requested. | “Dundee City Council said that we were adequately housed. I explained everything to them, and I kept phoning them and phoning them, and they just wouldn’t give us a house. He ended up passing away in March. Just on that chair.” |
|                     | Feeling stable enough to disengage from services after successful support | Participants reported feeling stable enough to disengage from a service and focus on other elements of their lives.   | “Then after two years I’ve decided I’m no needing that help, so to speak.”  |

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|                             | Higher levels of wellbeing from peer support                          | Participants reported feeling high levels of emotional wellbeing and feelings of inclusion after becoming parts of a wider network within an organisation. | “I dinnae ken where I’d be if I didnae have the lads. [...] But they helped me clean up my act, just get my shit together really.”  |
| Suggestions for improvement | More empathy from support workers                                     | Service users wished for a more empathetic treatment from staff.   | “They should show compassion to people. They should show that people is willing to try, and are signing on.”  |
|                             | More support services   | Service users wished for a greater range of support services.  | “Personally, I think we’re needing more like groups for single people that live on their own, whether it is drink, drugs, whatever. Part of the reason we do end up on them, is that you’re at home and have nobody to talk to. Just the boredom makes you turn to the bottle. Go somewhere for that bit of support.” |
|                             | Longer hours for drop-ins   | Service users requested longer opening hours to deal with issues that occurred during non-standard opening hours.  | “You need something like this 24/7. That would just be excellent, like places you could drop in in the middle of the night.”  |
| Outlook on future prospects | Not currently engaged in anything new, but positive about the future. |  |   |

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|  | Feeling worried and anxious, not hopeful towards future improvement.                   |  |
|  | Plans or current engagement in a new project, and hopeful towards its future benefits. |  |

## Support worker interviews

| Codes                    | Subcodes               | Explanation  | Example  |
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| <b>Descriptive codes</b> |                        |  |  |
| Background               | Employment history     | Support workers' employment history either at the current organisation or previous | "I've been here since the beginning."  |
|                          | Organisational history | Summary of the background of the services at which the                             | "We started off as a small support group, you know, visiting other organisations where we could speak to folk, but we have had a solid base for almost two decades now." |
| <b>Analytical codes</b>  |                        |  |  |
| <b>Service users</b>     |                        |  |  |
| Target groups            | Conditional            | Details of requirements to accessing service                                       | "We work with anyone that comes in and considers themselves to have a financial issue. Welfare issues and debt problems mainly."   |

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|   | Unconditional           | Worker claims service is open to all.  | “We differ from the other foodbanks because we don't turn anyone away. It's enough to say, "I need help because I can't afford to eat" [...].”   |
| Relationships between workers and service users | Professional            | Participants reported maintaining a supportive but professional relationship with the service users.                             | “We do offer support, but it's mainly short-term. It might be all that they need. We'll support them up to that point, usually just a few months, and then we'll withdraw.”                    |
|   | Casual                  | Participants reported a friendly and casual relationship with service users, which sometimes extended beyond the service sphere. | “I'd say I've become quite friendly with a lot of the regulars. I've been for coffees with some of the ones who have been here for years.”   |
| Effect on service users                         | Sense of community      | Staff reported a communal feeling between workers and service users.   | “We're a little community. People generally feel quite comfortable here.”  |
|   | Increased confidence    | Staff recognised the increase in self-confidence in service users from attending a service.                                      | “There's a couple of folk that have really come on, one guy in particular actually, I didn't realise how much confidence it gave them.”  |
|   | Motivation to volunteer | Staff noticed that service users became motivated to volunteer through service access.   | “We have a great team of volunteers here. Some came here because they found help they so desperately needed and now want to give back, and others just come in because they want to help out.” |

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| Background of service users    | “Chaotic backgrounds”                    | Staff reported that service users tended to come from “chaotic backgrounds”.  | “People come in from such chaotic backgrounds, so you sometimes get a bit of commotion, but generally everyone just comes along and chats to each other.”   |
|                                | “You wouldn’t know that they’re in debt” | Staff reported that service users were not struggling with obvious financial difficulties.  | “We work with a lot of folk that you’d expect to come here, but you also get those people that you wouldn’t know that they’re in debt, ‘cause they’ve got a BMW, wear fancy clothes, just hide it from the world really.”   |
| Effect on workers              | Individual sense of purpose              | Staff reported feeling a sense of purpose when carrying out their work  | “I worked with [statutory services] in the past. I did a lot of paperpushing, so this is completely different, which is really nice. I didn’t think I was a people person, but possibly I am. [...] It gives me a sense of purpose.”  |
|                                | Feeling overworked                       | Staff reported feeling emotionally and mentally strained by working in their jobs.  | “I’ve had to take a few months off work. The stress was just getting to me. It’s not the people, but I just feel like I never get a break.”   |
| <b>Partnership working</b>     |  |   |   |
| Effects of partnership working | Better coordination between services     | The support workers would entail how building connections between services would enable improved service provision due to a simpler communication process between them. | “I think that the partnership working has really helped us, because we’ve been able to become a bit more specialised in what we do and we’re not so much stuck on trying to solve a whole bunch of issues. If we need someone to support us with another specific issue, we can just get in touch with them.” |



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|                             | “Collaboration without competition” | Some organisations spoke of the benefits of certain organisations working with each other with a shared aim, but without the pressure of feeling that they are stealing or competing for each other’s resources. | “The [group of organisations] are really working together and it’s really good that the collaboration is there without the competition, you know?”   |
| Gaps in partnership working | Referrals without follow-up         | Staff reported service users being referred to an organisation without following up on its benefit.  | “So anyone that phoned us up, if they agreed we’d pass on their number to someone in the Council, who’d then phone them and review whether we provided a good service or not. But we’ve never reviewed whether it’s been good where they’ve been referred onto.” |
| Referral process            | Self-referrals                      | Workers reported service users accessing their organisation on a self-referral basis.  | “A lot of people just refer themselves.”   |
|                             | Between organisations               | Workers reported service users accessing their organisation through referral from another services.  | “The referrals really come from anywhere though. NHS24, Police Tayside, fire service.”   |

| <b>Austerity measures</b> |                      |   |   |
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| Funding cuts              | Funding applications | Staff reported austerity measures pushing them to carry out time-consuming funding applications.                        | “But we’ve still got an awful lot of paperwork to do when it comes to funding.”   |
|                           | Redevelopment issues | Staff reported that funding cuts led to redevelopment, which in some cases caused confusion and a lack of organisation. | “. We’ve been going through some redevelopment of what we should be doing. [...] Doing everything, the whole gambit. We've been going through review, and ultimately we don't know what the team is gonna look like.”   |
| <b>Reflective codes</b>   |                      |   |   |
| Good practice             | Person-centred       | Staff reported the benefits of carrying out person-centred service provision  | “I think everyone's quite open to adapting things. We know people don't fit into boxes, you know. Traditional service delivery, you have to have a learning difficulty, or a physical difficulty, but they just don't fit into those things, so sometimes you just have to be a bit creative with these things. It allows us to adapt and explore things. [...] Coming here you do have to get creative and think along a bit. Think of needs and wants and outcomes. Got to be a bit more open.” |

## Polymaker interviews

| Descriptive codes |                              |  |   |
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| Effects of policy | Policy influence on practice | Polymakers describe the effect policy has on their practice.               | “A lot of direction for us, in terms of development, comes from the Fairness Commission. It’s something we are working to. One of the sections in our strategic plan is a section on inequalities, and a section on prevention to all the inequality that goes on. For example, we’ve used some of our funding to put people from welfare rights in GP practices. Obviously, we do equality training and things like that as well.” |
|                   | Policy influence on outlook  | Polymakers describe the effect policy has on their organisational outlook. | “I think the Fairness Commission is for sure up there on our agenda. It’s not a standalone document, it’s really integral to the other strategies in the city, homelessness and alcohol and drugs etc. It’s all interlinked and interwoven”   |

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| <b>Partnership working</b>            | Strategic planning             | Policymakers characterised partnership working through working jointly towards a mutual goal through a shared agenda.             | “We would start with the strategic plan, so a strategic plan would look at – like a normal strategic planning process, looking for services, looking for gaps, looking to see what your future modelling would be. Your financial resource, your demographic information, your demand and capacity prediction. You’d start with something like that.”   |
|                                       | Networking and decision-making | Policymakers described partnership working as collaborating with other organisations to make decisions that affect the community. | “Partnership is quite a broad statement. [Our partnership has a] support system making major decisions in a partnership way. So, if I talked about integrated care for example, we have representatives from the Third Sector, from carers, from service users, however the partnership isn’t necessarily from different organisations. So you’d have to make decisions about how funding is spent.”  |
| <b>Effects of partnership working</b> | Eased referral service         |   | “We have done a coproduction with service users, and the people were telling us, in approaching services, they were coming along and having to tell us stories, then after referral having a series of having to tell the story over and over again. Obviously people are actually experiencing difficulties and it is really difficult to speak about it. It is already hard the first time and it’s not great having to put people through that over and over |

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|                         |                                  |   | again. So that's helped a bit, having good information transfer, having systems where people come and people are actually interviewed and assessed, and it's a team around you"          |
| <b>Reflective codes</b> |                                  |   |  |
| Good practice           | Person-centred service provision | Policymakers reported the benefits of carrying out person-centred service provision | "[...] we need to look at how we can develop things on the ground and how we actually move the services forward in a person-centred way. I think it's really good to get that overview." |

